

# Inspection report for Lynnfield Children and Community Centre

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Local authority	Hartlepool
Inspection number	383698
Inspection dates	11 – 12 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Rachael Flesher HMI

Centre leader	Elizabeth Hipwell
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Lynnfield Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Playmates II Day Nursery

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

**Report Published: October 2011**

## 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 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the management board and the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Lynnfield Children's Centre is situated in Hartlepool town centre close to shops and local amenities. It is located in the same building as the community centre, attached to Lynnfield Primary school. The primary school is inspected separately and inspection reports can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). The centre has developed from a Sure Start local programme and was designated as a phase one children's centre in 2006.

The centre serves families living in the Grange ward, the sixth most deprived ward in Hartlepool and in one of the 10% most deprived areas in the country, and the Park ward, one of the most affluent wards in Hartlepool. One third of children in the centre's reach area are living in poverty. The population is predominantly of White British heritage with an increasing number of families from Black and minority ethnic groups for whom English is an additional language. A large Pakistani and Bangladeshi community is established in the reach area, along with a small number of Chinese families, Thai families and asylum-seeking families.

Families face issues of third generation unemployment with a high number of families living in workless household, claiming job seeker allowance and workless benefits. They often have low levels of literacy and numeracy skills and low aspirations. There is a prevalent drug

culture and high levels of crime in the centre's reach area. The centre also serves families facing issues of domestic violence, drug and alcohol misuse, poor housing, lone parent households, low household income, debt and poor money management.

The centre commissions Playmates II nursery to provide early years provision for families in the area. This provision is inspected separately and inspection reports can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). Many children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills below those expected for their age.

The centre is governed by Lynnfield Primary School board of governors and is operationally managed by the local authority. It has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, including one parent and a range of partner professionals. The centre uses a range of strategies to consult with local families but does not currently have a parents' forum.

## 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 families**

2

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

## Main findings

Outcomes, quality of provision, and leadership and management are all good. The centre's capacity for sustained improvement is also good, leading to good overall effectiveness.

The centre routinely seeks the views of those using the centre and the wider community and these are meaningfully used to shape services, evaluate the effectiveness of provision and to inform important decisions. As a result, services and activities are well matched to the needs of the community and participation rates by most target groups of families are good and improving, thus providing good value for money. However, despite concerted efforts by the centre, currently only one parent sits on the advisory board and a forum to ensure parents can further contribute to the decision making and governance of the centre is not in place.

Particular strengths of the centre are the strong partnerships in place with a wide range of professionals and organisations ensuring highly effective integrated working and service delivery. Information is shared to ensure the needs of young children and their families are identified swiftly and steps are taken to address them. This ensures children are safe and protected and their outcomes are good and improving. The local authority and centre leader provide strong leadership, direction and professional supervision. Staff state the centre leader, 'motivates and inspires', 'raises aspirations' and they are, 'supported to develop to their full potential'. As one member of the governing body summarised, this results in 'high quality, committed and enthusiastic staff'.

Systems for gathering data and information about the needs of the families in the centre reach area, setting targets for improvement, and demonstrating the impact of services and activities on outcomes for families are robust and embedded among all staff and partners. This ensures they know the needs of the community very well, have correctly identified their target groups and individual families in most need of intervention and support and can fully demonstrate their good performance. The centre has engaged the majority of some of their target groups and is working hard to reach out to engage and improve the outcomes of more families with varied success. However, the centre has the ability and determination to continue improving based on what it has accomplished so far.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve the outcomes for more families by increasing the engagement of target groups and individual families in most need of intervention and support in the centre services and activities.
- Improve partnership with parents to ensure more can contribute to the decision making and governance of the centre by encouraging membership on the advisory board and developing a parents' forum.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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Children are safeguarded and families using the centre feel safe. Very good partnership working and the effective systems for assessing users' needs are having a positive impact on outcomes for children, including those subject to Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes, looked after children and children subject to a child protection plan. Partners and staff intervene early to support families and as a result, the centre is reducing the number of children deemed in need and preventing situations from reaching crisis point. Through the services provided, children and parents are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their families safe and ensure precautions are in place to prevent accidents

and injuries occurring in and around the home. Emergency hospital admissions have decreased as a result.

Strong partnerships are in place with health professionals and a good range of child and family health services, closely-matched to the needs and health targets of the reach area is delivered from the centre. The centre provides support to families from conception to ensure professionals can intervene early. The centre has achieved the Hartlepool Healthy Early Years Status ensuring it promotes all aspects of health outcomes. Provision is used well by the majority of target groups and as a result, healthy outcomes for families are good and improving. For example, more mothers are sustaining breastfeeding at 6–8 weeks, 90% of children are immunised, fewer mothers are smoking in pregnancy, there is a good take-up of families using the fruit and vegetable delivery scheme, families are eating healthier and obesity levels are declining. Parents learning to cook healthy meals for their families at the 'Ready for baby' course stated, 'I would cook this at home', and, 'I would never have thought I could make this. I have never looked at a recipe book'.

Families using the centre and the wider community treat each other with respect. Most families using the centre express their views and contribute to shaping services. However, not enough parents are involved in bringing a positive contribution to the governance of the centre through membership of a parents' forum and the advisory board.

A good proportion of families access the available advice and guidance regarding benefits and money management and their economic stability and independence are improving as a result. Parents are supported on their often long journey into employment through the centre providing activities and courses to develop their employability skills, including their personal and social skills.

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points in developing their skills for the future. Their behaviour is good and they are developing positive relationships. Schools report that children arrive ready to learn and settle in well. Good-quality transition arrangements and partnership working are in place to ensure consistency and the continuity of care, learning and development of children. The centre ensures a strong focus on the areas of development where children are achieving less well. All three- and four-year-old children are accessing their free nursery education entitlement and the most vulnerable two-year-olds are accessing 15 hours of childcare a week through the government funded two-year-old nursery pilot. As a result, the majority of children achieve 78 points in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the gap between the lowest-achieving 20% and the rest is narrowing.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre works well in partnership with other services to ensure assessments, such as those carried out under the CAF process and for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are robust, well informed and lead to early intervention. Staff are skilled at identifying the needs of families and intervene early to ensure they receive the personalised support they need to improve their outcomes.

All partners take an active role in promoting good-quality, integrated provision which is responsive to local needs. Provision is based on secure analysis of need, using meaningful consultation and evaluation processes to ensure the centre knows the families using the centre well. This ensures the range of services, activities and opportunities meets the needs of the large majority of users. As a result, outcomes and participation and attendance rates of most target groups are good and improving and users are generally representative of the community that the centre serves.

Good provision enables children to learn and develop across all areas of learning through good-quality activities and resources that interest and engage them. Expectant parents are given very good support and guidance to enable them to give their babies the best start in life. Parents are improving their parenting skills due to the effective parenting programmes, support and modelling of good practices by staff. As parents summarised, 'the tips are amazing – they are magic', and, 'it makes you think about what you're doing with children'. Many families are engaged in courses and activities designed to develop their personal and social skills and their employability, including the very successful volunteer programme. As a result, they are developing confidence and self-esteem, and aspirations are improving. For

example, the very successful hairdressing and nail and beauty courses, delivered following expressions of interest from users. This led to a large majority of attendees going on to further courses and training, an apprenticeship and paid employment.

The environment is warm and inviting. Staff and partners at all levels are friendly and extremely welcoming and place great importance on encouraging the community to access the centre and services. They are skilled at using every opportunity to engage families with the range of support and services available. Centre staff provide effective personalised support for families in crisis, offering good levels of care and guidance. As parents stated, 'I have lots of hope here. It's not dark any more', 'through help from the family support workers I feel like I want to shine', and, 'I don't want to hide away anymore'.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>2</b>

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

<b>2</b>
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The inclusion of all children and families, including children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is promoted effectively. The centre plays a significant role in the life of the community and is breaking down barriers to further community cohesion. This has resulted in the centre successfully engaging with many of its most vulnerable and hard-to-reach families. The centre is successfully narrowing the gap between Black and minority ethnic groups and the rest by engaging more families in the centre, partly due to working in partnership with the local Salaam Centre.

Governance and accountability arrangements, as well as clear roles and responsibilities at all levels of leadership and management, are well established and understood by all. Staff, leaders and partners routinely reflect on their practice and provision to secure continuous improvement. Users' views are thoroughly sought and used to contribute to good self-evaluation and in shaping services. Self-evaluation provides the centre with a good understanding of its strengths and areas for development and is used to inform planning. Data and information are fully utilised to set measurable, challenging targets, and they are used to analyse the engagement of families and target groups and to fully demonstrate the impact the centre is having on their outcomes. Resource planning takes very good account of the need to ensure that services are sustainable and the centre provides good value for money.

Safer recruitment procedures are followed and all relevant checks are made to ensure that all staff are suitable and safe to work with children. All staff, including volunteers, receive high-quality child protection training and are confident in their role to safeguard children. Risks are thoroughly assessed and minimised. Staff are effectively deployed. Good professional supervision and management arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of staff and ensure their safety and well-being and ongoing professional development. Staff development and training are effective and appropriate in order to meet the current and future needs of children and families in the reach area.

The centre takes a full and active role in developing and implementing a variety of partnerships' activities which include statutory, private, voluntary and independent providers and organisations. This ensures effective partnership working that enhances opportunities for families in the area and has a positive impact in securing good outcomes.

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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</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>2</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>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.</b>	<b>2</b>



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

The available inspection report for Playmates II Day Nursery.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* 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 Lynnfield Children and Community Centre on 11 and 12 October 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. Like you, we found your children's centre to be warm and welcoming. Staff are friendly, enthusiastic and committed to improving the outcomes for your families. They place great importance on encouraging families from your community to access the centre and services. Your centre knows the needs of your community well and works effectively with other professionals to ensure the services it provides meet these needs. However, despite concerted effort, your centre has had varied success at engaging with families from some of their target groups, such as fathers and families from Black and minority ethnic groups and those identified as in most need of early intervention and support. Your centre has been asked to improve this to ensure even more families benefit from the good services and activities to improve their outcomes.

Your centre meaningfully gathers your views and uses these to make sure the services they are providing are what you want and need most. As a result, a good proportion of you take part in centre services and the outcomes for your families are good and improving. Your families are safer in and around your homes, financially better off due to the good support and guidance provided on money management and benefits, and healthier. Those of you who are expecting a baby are given very good support and guidance to enable you to give your babies the best start in life. You are improving your parenting skills through the good support and guidance by staff. As some of you told us, 'the tips are amazing – they are magic', and, 'it makes you think about what you're doing with children'. As some of you who attend the 'Ready for baby' course where you learn to cook healthy meals for your families told us, 'I would cook this at home', and, 'I would never have thought I could make this. I have never looked at a recipe book'. However, your centre is struggling to encourage more of you to become members of their advisory board and parents' forum so you can contribute to the governance of the centre and help drive improvements further. Your centre has been asked to improve this.

Many of you take part in courses and activities designed to develop your personal and social skills and help you prepare for employment. As a result, you are developing confidence, self-esteem and aspirations. For example, the very successful hairdressing and nail and beauty courses, that some of you requested. This led to many of you who attended going on to further courses and training, an apprenticeship and paid employment. Your children are making good progress in developing their skills for the future and schools report that your children arrive ready to learn and settle in well.

Your centre provides good support and guidance for you and your families in times of crisis. As some of you told us, 'I have lots of hope here. It's not dark any more', 'through help from

the family support workers I feel like I want to shine', and, 'I don't want to hide away anymore'.

Your centre strives to be better and is always looking for ways to improve to ensure it is having the biggest impact on improving outcomes for you and your families. Your children's centre has a good capacity to improve further the outcomes for families living in your community and to continue to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest. It does so with great determination and dedication. We wish you all the very best for the future.

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