

Inspection report for Selby North Children's Centre

Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	383603
Inspection dates	11 - 12 October 2011
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	121414 Selby Community Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Bright Start Day Nursery

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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 co-located primary 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

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

The inspectors held meetings with families using the centre, the children's centre manager, members of staff, partner agency staff, local authority representatives, the headteacher of the co-located school and steering group members.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Selby North Children's Centre (SNCC) is a phase one centre which was designated in February 2008. The centre is situated in the middle of a large social housing estate on the site of the Selby Community Primary School. The centre uses space across three buildings as well as other venues in the local area to deliver activities and services. The centre is situated in an area which is one of the highest 20% of wards in England for teenage pregnancy. The number of children under five years of age living in out-of-work benefit claimant households has increased but is in line with county and national averages. In the reach area, 5% of children live in households with single parents. The very large majority of families is of White British heritage, the remainder is from a range of other ethnic minorities, a large proportion of which is Polish-speaking. A local authority Traveller site is within the centre's reach area. Obesity rates for children in reception are lower than the national average. Social isolation and access to transport have been identified as an issue for families who live in rural locations including small hamlets. Children enter early education with skills well below those expected for their age particularly in communication, language and literacy.

The centre manager has been overseeing the work of the Selby South Children’s Centres as well as SNCC during a maternity leave period. Both SNCC and Selby South Children’s Centre provide activities and services to users across both reach areas.

The centre operates a part-time crèche to support parents accessing adult learning at the centre. Parents and carers are sign-posted to other local providers including the Bright Start Day Nursery, based at Selby College which is the designated childcare provider.

SNCC’s reach area consists of 1248 children under five years, with 373 currently registered representing 30% of the total number. The centre team consists of a centre manager, three parent support advisors and two crèche workers. A senior crèche worker has recently been recruited. The centre accommodates staff from the wider integrated services team including the early intervention team, the inclusion officer and the childcare sufficiency support officer.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Families accessing services at the centre receive quality support and play sessions that are enjoyed by parents, carers and children. Personal testimonial from families demonstrate the improving positive impact that this has had on their lives. The centre is gaining a more informed view of the needs of families by more effectively gathering the views of its users and developing productive relationships with partner agencies. Effective partnership-working is enabling the centre to better meet the needs of users and tailor services accordingly. The centre and the local authority are responsive to improvement initiatives and are investing in a wide range of staff development including ‘staff swaps’ and the shadowing of partner professionals. Effective systems are being developed by the centre to help parents who have children with disabilities such as the recently-introduced ‘Family Voice,’ a support group for parents and carers. The development of the on-site crèche is invaluable to parents and carers who want to improve their learning and education through courses that the children’s centre provides.

Staff organise enjoyable and interesting sessions in the well-resourced play rooms and outside play areas that are appropriate for the age of the children. These provide fun and challenge and encourage children to make independent choices about play and activities. Good-quality activities are planned into sessions in the crèche such as 'Learning Stories' which recognise how children make progress and respond to different aspects of play. Information is shared with parents about their children's activities and the reasons why they may be making particular choices in their play.

The centre works well with its vulnerable families once contact has been established. However, the number of families engaged with the centre is low. The centre has been slow to develop successful strategies to significantly engage more families and opportunities are missed. Some families using the centre for sessions run by health professionals such as 'antenatal' are not well-informed about the other services available at the centre. The process used for registration is unclear and some parents are put off completing the form, preferring to take it home for completion later.

A range of data including that which is available from the local authority provides good information about the centre's reach area and helps in the effective identification of target groups. Where it is more difficult to obtain data about families, the centre works creatively to identify them and understand their needs. However, the ability of the data to inform the longer-term benefits of the service is underdeveloped.

Governance arrangements are satisfactory and the diverse steering group which has good representation promotes informed discussion around the needs of families in the local area. However, accountabilities are not consistently understood and the roles of steering group members are not clear enough to provide sufficient challenge to improve outcomes. This indicates that the centre currently has only satisfactory capacity to improve its performance.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Take concerted action to increase the number of users and level of engagement from the target groups rapidly.
- With the local authority and in consultation with the steering group:
 - clarify accountability arrangements
 - develop strategies to evaluate and demonstrate the impact of services
 - ensure that there is challenge to improve measurable outcomes for families.
- Strengthen the self-evaluation and target-setting process by using outcome measures to inform future planning.

How good are outcomes for families?

Outcomes for families are satisfactory and there is an improved awareness by parents using the centre of how they can keep themselves and their children healthy. Along with partner health professionals the centre effectively targets young parents allowing them to gain benefit from sessions such as 'Yorbabe' providing support through pregnancy, birth and parenting. 'It has increased my confidence' said one dad-to-be. Visits to the hospital labour ward supported by the children's centre are particularly valued by families. One young parent spoke about her positive experience of being able to access the parenting sessions and said, 'it has helped me to overcome isolation by mixing with other young parents where I feel comfortable and not judged'.

Developments with health partners enable families to access advice and guidance from 'drop-in sessions' and a range of breastfeeding support sessions. The 'breastfeeding café' is supported by breastfeeding counsellors and the centre has commissioned services to provide a team of breastfeeding peer supporters to improve support for breastfeeding rates in the area further. The initiation rates have improved in the Selby district; however the numbers of parents who sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks are low at 31% and well below the national average.

A new development of on-site child health checks by health visitors, well-attended by parents gives families the opportunity to access play sessions for their children which have been designed to run at the same time. Parents are able to socialise, develop relationships and friendships with other parents and carers and share their knowledge and experiences of their children.

Families' understanding of how they can keep themselves and their children safe improves as a result of the home safety scheme. Centre staff and partner agencies work in partnership to highlight any concerns and target support with regard to 'safeguarding'. The use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is currently low in the area and the centre recognises this as an area in need of development. Access to the centre is controlled and appropriate risk assessments are carried out for all the premises.

Children make improvements in their learning through sessions such as the 'Stay and Play' which staff link to the Early Years Foundation Stage framework and design activities and resources to encourage development for the future. The skills of an Early Years Foundation consultant are effectively employed to support staff in this developing area. The centre promotes the development of children's speech and language well. Parents are able to access 'drop-in' sessions, thus avoiding the need for excessive waiting time for appointments.

The centre has an active parents' forum where parents value the opportunity to express their views and contribute to decision-making. An example of how the centre listens to parents and provides support as identified by parents is 'we asked for some support for

parents in coping with post-natal depression and the centre responded and brought a specialist in to improve parents' awareness.'

Families enjoy and gain benefit from the adult learning sessions offered at the centre. Parents have achieved accredited qualifications and improved their levels of literacy. Support for families through on-site partners from the Citizens' Advice Bureau and North Yorkshire Credit Union is helping families to improve their awareness of strategies for economic stability and consider further learning, progression and employment.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target 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 children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
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	3
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.	3

How good is the provision?

3

The centre continues to improve its range of services to be more closely aligned to the needs of local families. The on-site crèche provides valuable care for children allowing parents and carers the opportunity to access adult learning and support for themselves. Links with the health visitor team are strong and used well to inform planning of sessions and support. The centre is responsive to users' needs and is improving the analysis of data to identify its target groups within its reach and to help those families most in need more effectively. However, the number of families accessing services overall is too low.

Children from the Polish communities enjoy the opportunities they have to play together and learn about their heritage and their cultural festivals and events. The Polish community is well-represented through the steering group. Along with a number of partner organisations, the centre has previously been successful in developing links with Traveller communities and provided play sessions for children within their communities.

Useful research carried out in the community has led to grandparent sole carers and their grandchildren being identified as a priority group. Promotion of services to this group has improved and some have participated in 'family fun for grandparents and grandchildren'. A grandparents' group has been formed to identify better how the centre can support them in

the future. The centre has also responded and provided effective information on substance misuse and Internet safety.

Families value the care, guidance and support provided by centre staff. Parents commented that staff are always 'friendly and welcoming'. Case studies and personal testimonials provide evidence of the varied support provided by the centre and how it has improved families' coping strategies when facing times of difficulty and personal crisis.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Staff feel well-supported by centre leaders and professional development opportunities are good. The centre closes for a morning each week to allow the staff team of parent support assistants and crèche workers to meet, share practice and undertake planned staff development activities. Staff welcome the opportunity to take on delegated responsibility and specialise in managing aspects of the centre's development and work towards achieving its core purpose. The impact of the recent restructuring of the local authority posts into area teams is yet to be fully realised but is starting to improve the centre's ability to use its data about its reach area more effectively. The positive impact of services is demonstrated through user-evaluation and feedback activities. However, the centre has not yet established contact with sufficient families in all its targets groups to demonstrate fully how it is making a difference to the most vulnerable in its reach area and the longer-term impact of its services.

Partnership-working is good and partners have collaborated well together to provide a range of services that meet the needs of users. Good support is available for adult learning through effective arrangements with a number of training providers. The health teams are now providing clinics and parenting classes at the centre where parents can access other services including play sessions for their children.

Governance is satisfactory and the local authority meets its statutory obligations. The steering group has wide representation and along with the active parents' forum ensures that users' views are gathered effectively. However, the current arrangements within the steering group provide insufficient clarity of roles, responsibilities and levels of accountability. There is insufficient challenge to the centre to develop and improve its service further and ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families. As a result, the centre is providing satisfactory value for money.

Inspectors agreed with many of the grades within the centre's self-evaluation. However, the areas for improvement identified by the centre are insufficiently focussed to inform action planning.

Safeguarding requirements are satisfactory. All relevant policies and procedures are in place and leaders ensure that appropriate checks and assessments are carried out and recorded. The effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is still a developing area for the centre. Equality and diversity arrangements are satisfactory with all users treated with dignity, respect and where staff display genuine concern for individual welfare. There is good promotion and celebration of the Polish culture.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
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.	3

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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Selby North Children's Centre on 11 - 12 October 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to everyone who found the time and made the journey to come and speak with us. The centre has a developing awareness of those families in your community that most need the support of the children's centre such as teenage parents and grandparents. For those of you who are users you spoke about how the range of services is helping to improve your lives and those of your children. It was good to hear that you enjoy coming to the centre and that you have been able to make friends. You told us that you would like to have more play sessions. I am pleased to say the centre continues to improve the quality and availability of play sessions and it was good to hear that you enjoy the 'Stay-and-Play' session that is now run alongside the child health clinic where you can meet with other parents.

The centre has developed some good partnerships with other agencies. This has enabled you to access services and support at the children's centre such as ante-natal, child health clinic, smoking cessation and breastfeeding support along with adult learning, the Citizens' Advice Bureau and North Yorkshire Credit Union. This is giving you support and advice to improve your understanding of how you might manage your income better and plan for the future.

The centre manager and staff work well together and they continue to develop their knowledge of up-to-date practices so that they can find better ways to provide support for you. The local authority along with the steering group provides direction for the centre. However, the roles and responsibilities of members of the steering group need more clarification to enable them to make a greater contribution and use their specialist skills and knowledge more effectively and improve outcomes for families in the Selby area.

The centre has satisfactory arrangements to keep you and your children safe and we were pleased that you are able to access support to make your homes a safer place.

The centre works hard to engage with families who are from non-British heritage and marginalised groups. We observed the Polish school and heard how much you appreciate the opportunity to come together as a community supported by the centre.

We have recommended that the centre increases the pace with which to engage with substantially more of the families in the area and in particular those who may be in greatest need.

Thank you once again for your contribution to this inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

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