

# Inspection report for Yorkswood Children's Centre

Local authority	Solihull
Inspection number	382113
Inspection dates	18–19 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Susan Crawford HMI

Centre governance	Action For Children
Centre leader	Pat Roberts
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Yorkswood Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Brambles Neighbourhood Nursery EY319259

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 was carried out on the 17 May 2011 under Section 49 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 the local authority, Action for Children, centre staff, representatives from the partnership advisory board, representatives from services that use the centre and users.

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

## Information about the centre

Yorkswood is a phase one children's centre providing the full core offer to a community which is in one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. Solihull local authority has a contract with Action for Children to manage 11 of the 14 children's centres in Solihull, of which Yorkswood is one. It has close links with Kingshurst Children's Centre. Yorkswood is part of a cluster of children's centres who work across North Solihull. The children's centre's improvement board holds the centre to account through its business plan and contract with Action for Children. There is also a partnership advisory board that represents users, the local community and service partners.

The centre provides health and family support services, adult training, and early years advice and guidance. There is a high number of workless families dependant on state benefits. The level of unemployment and the proportions of people who leave school without qualifications, teenage parents and obese children of Reception

age are above average. There is a small minority of families from minority ethnic backgrounds. The majority of children enter early years settings with skill development that is below national expectations.

## 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**

**2**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**2**

## Main findings

Yorkswood Children's Centre plays an important role in improving the lives of young children and their parents and carers. It has the full confidence of the community because it provides exceptionally high levels of care, guidance and support. Staff know the personal needs of individual parents and carers and direct them to the most appropriate professionals who help them overcome the difficulties they face. The centre pays extremely close attention to keeping everyone safe. The safeguarding of all users while in the centre, out and about on trips, or working in the community is central to its work. Risk assessments are robust and comprehensive.

Parents and carers particularly enjoy the many opportunities for them to have fun and play and learn with their children. Community events arranged at the weekend or at holiday times are advertised by the centre and are well attended. The centre uses some of these occasions to attract new users and provide introductions to a wide range of other services. Case studies show that the centre has given very good support to parents and carers in times of crisis. Parents and carers say that the centre has been influential in developing their confidence as well as their social and parenting skills.

Provision to help adults to learn and develop is outstanding. The centre has an excellent focus on individualised and purposeful learning; each user has an individual plan which is reviewed each week. This ensures that the correct level of support is provided, experiences are shared and evaluation is completed. Staff have high expectations of users. Their achievements are celebrated and futures greatly considered, each term a celebration event takes place where certificates are presented to parents and children, representatives from the community are also invited. Learning and development opportunities at the centre are truly inspiring. The learning and development co-ordinator makes referrals to other services at the

centre which ensures a holistic approach providing individuals and their families with the help that they need.

Assessment is threaded through all aspects of the centre's work which ensures that users receive a tailor-made package of services to meet their individual needs very effectively. The centre values the close partnership it has with parents and carers. Their views are sought regularly and acted on. For example, feedback about the very well attended baby clinic showed that users felt that it was not safe for their small babies. The centre acted on this information and put on an additional session. Along with other service partners, members of the partnership advisory board, parents and carers all play an active role in shaping the centres services. They have a good understanding of the centre's strengths and contribute their ideas for development.

Good leadership and management, along with high aspirations for the community, result in good outcomes, especially for the children. Leaders ensure that everyone using the centre is fully included in what it has to offer. Senior leaders and managers pursue ambitious strategies to remove barriers to access to services. For example, health visitors ensure all new mothers are invited for an eight-month check; any who are not available or miss the check receive a home visit. Currently, this is undertaken jointly with a nursery nurse attached to the health visiting team. The centre is in the process of improving this practise by undertaking more joint visits to further assist in user engagement.

The centre's self-evaluation is thorough and is supported by evidence of the impact which the centre's services have on outcomes for its users. Data that is up-to-date and specific is not currently available from the local authority to enable the centre to tailor its services more specifically. For example health professionals identified through their own local knowledge that those wishing to gain advice and help on subjects such as sexual health were not identified by the local authority. The centre has successfully identified areas of need and shortfalls in provision because of the good-quality information that health and other professionals provide, as well as staffs own excellent local knowledge of their reach area. This enables the centre to target most groups of people to ensure that their needs are met. All users are assessed sensitively and appropriately which ensures that services are tailored to their specific needs. The centre promotes equality well. It co-ordinates services and signposts users effectively to ensure its services are fully utilised by users, the wider community and partners. Inclusion is central to the centre's vision in engaging the community.

Strong partnerships with childminders in the area significantly boosts the quality of childcare for the youngest children, the provision in the centre also enhances this which gives children a firm foundation for learning which they build on in the nursery. Children transfer into nursery easily because they already know many of the staff who work in both the centre and the nursery.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- In conjunction with the local authority, establish accurate relevant data that will help senior leaders and the partnership advisory board:
  - to develop a clear understanding of the reach area
  - to provide challenge and identify fully the specific needs within the area.
- Develop further outreach working in conjunction with partners to ensure that all unmet need is identified and, where relevant, tackled through an enhanced range of activities

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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Colourful posters, the sharing of information such as menus and recipes, and discussions with staff help users to develop a good awareness of health issues. Healthy snacks are provided and dietary requirements addressed. Staff support children's personal and independent skills effectively such as toilet training and hand-washing skills. Parents are successfully signposted to additional services following open discussions with the staff. For example, referral to the in-house mental health co-ordinator for parents who may be under stress or in difficulty. This has a significant impact on users' emotional well-being. The in-house speech and language coordinator has involvement with parents to improve communication skills. Case studies show that this service has a significant impact on children's learning and communication skills. Groups, such as baby massage, promote good bonding between mother and baby which in turn promotes positive mental health. Users' evaluations show that these groups help them to feel more in tune with their babies' feelings and that their babies' physical health has improved as a result.

Families are increasingly aware of safety in the home and at the centre. Valuable support is given with regard to behaviour management, and regular courses such as 'Understanding Your Child's Behaviour' are run for all parents not just parents experiencing problem behaviour. Due to the high demand and positive impact of these courses, they are now a regular item on the children's centre timetable. Families who are vulnerable due to their circumstances are referred to the centre and are assessed effectively to ensure that support is well organised between the agencies. All relevant staff are trained in the use of the Common Assessment Framework which supports the children by engaging other agencies and involving their parents and carers.

Learning and development records are in place for the children who attend the centre. Systems are being developed further to track their progress and enable services and activities to focus on needs. 'Stay and Play' sessions, 'Little Discoverers' and childminder groups provide a variety of activities to involve adults and children. Parenting skills are being successfully developed as a result of this intervention. Childminders are given the opportunity to gain further knowledge of the Early Years

Foundation Stage and how to put the learning and development requirements into practice. The local authority's support teachers ensure practitioners have a good understanding of their role in cascading their knowledge to parents and other adults to improve outcomes for children. Statistical data show that children's language skills, social and emotional development and physical development are not progressing as well as other areas of development. Following this evidence, training and support have been given to staff to encourage them to provide specific letters and sounds activities, to develop opportunities for modelling interaction. This has had a positive impact on children's development.

Shared respect between users encourages positive contribution. For example, within groups users discuss openly their issues and share experiences and advice as a result of the support given by the centre. Many feel that the services provided have made a significant difference to their lives. Staff work hard to encourage new families to access services coordinated by the centre. Current users feel staff's approach and understanding are reassuring and non-judgemental. Parents and carers support the centre well and make important contributions to decision-making through their representation on the parents' forum and partnership advisory board, they play an effective part in deciding and supporting the centre's development. Ideas and suggestions, often provided informally, bring about changes to the content and timing of courses and events as the centre works to meet the needs of the community. Parents and carers also act as volunteers in many different ways such as peer support for breastfeeding mothers and helping in the nursery.

Information with regard to financial support is also communicated effectively. One-to-one sessions are offered and users attend meetings with the Citizens Advice Bureau who support in the completion of applications for funding and benefits. Users are making a positive contribution through increasing their skills, knowledge and confidence by undertaking training, gaining qualifications and volunteering. In some cases, these opportunities lead to employment.

*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>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 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>2</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>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

**1**

Family support workers are extremely successful at assessing users' needs and using activities such as home visits, this is now being developed further which will involve joint visits with other partners such as health. This will better ensure that every hard to reach family is given the information through personal contact of a centre worker that will allow them to make an informed choice about services that the centre has on offer. Services are very successfully personalised to ensure the improvements to health, safety and achievement of users, currently these are good and improving. The centre has ensured that family support workers and children's centre workers are very well trained to coordinate and deliver a range of different services. Consequently, users gain great trust in individual workers that enables them to gain confidence and engage successfully in the services offered.

Partner agencies hold the centre in very high regard. Effective relationships have been established so that the centre can ensure that services are of a high quality for the users. Partner agencies are more effective at engaging users because of the centre's expertise at breaking down barriers.

Users recognise the centre as a place of safety. The centre has very successfully established itself as the first place to come to if users need help and advice. As one parent reported, 'When you walk through the door, everyone is smiling. You feel listened to and valued. They know who to get in touch with and if they can't help you themselves they know who to contact, and they understand that when you say you need help – you need it now.' The centre has successfully created opportunities to support families and enable them to contribute positively and grow in confidence as citizens and parents. Regular parenting classes help boost confidence and parents' enjoyment and involvement in their children's learning. Plenty of information and advice is available for parents seeking work, particularly for lone parents and those who are keen to increase their basic skills prior to their return to work. Well structured programmes engage parents and build their confidence which prepares them well for the future and gives them the aspirations to study for further qualifications.

The centre provides a wide range of group activities and courses aimed at improving the parenting skills and life chances of the community, families and children. These are popular and well attended. Local childminders appreciate well-targeted activities at the childminders' group which enhances their knowledge of child development.

*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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>1</b>

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

**2**

The whole staff team show enthusiasm, motivation and a commitment to improving outcomes for users and striving towards high-quality services. There are very effective use of collated data that the centre gathers which are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the services provided. The baseline data provided by the local authority are not always up to date or relevant and do not always provide all the necessary detail to identify all groups. This information is gathered through local knowledge of partners, users and staff. This takes time and resources to complete and is not always in the best format. This means that the partnership advisory board does not have robust data to allow them to consistently challenge the work of the centre.

Line-management arrangements are clear and understood by staff, who value the supervision and professional development they receive. The children's centre's improvement board provides challenge and support in decision making. In addition, the centre works well with the local authority to monitor its effectiveness through methods such as the 'annual conversation'. The self-evaluation process involves all partners and links into the centre's service development plan, which shows detailed targets.

The centre has built effective links with external agencies and other providers to help staff provide good-quality services. Community cohesion is given high priority and the children's centre support workers provide activities which establish good links with the local population and other groups or professionals in the area. By removing barriers for those who are hard to reach, the support workers enable them to access services. Marketing events are held in the local shopping centre and staff visit the school and any other community events to reach families. Services and specific workers are coordinated across neighbouring children's centres to ensure no duplication occurs. The centre is efficient in using its resources to support inclusion and provides good value for money. The tasks of the family support workers are carefully planned to reach out to the community. Through effective observation and monitoring the centre is helping children achieve, particularly those with special educational needs. The centre has achieved this by implementing programmes such as healthy eating and 'Stay and Play' sessions. The centre promotes equality well and is fully utilised by users, the wider community and partners.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent and all staff are highly aware of the procedures to follow if they have concerns, they work proactively and effectively to ensure children and families are safeguarded. Referrals of children and families in need and the outstanding cooperation between multi-agency groups contribute extremely well to improving the emotional health and well-being of users. They actively promote the safety and welfare of users and work proactively with other key



agencies. Safe recruitment practices are followed rigorously and the centre has effective systems to ensure all visitors to the centre follow safe practices.

Users' views are sought from sessions and activities in a variety of ways. The centre has consistent and productive partnerships with users, and users share their satisfaction of the centre's work. They feel well supported and welcomed. The parents' forum and the partnership advisory board are well attended by parents and carers, and users are fully engaged in shaping services and the governance of the centre.

*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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</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>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>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>

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

Brambles Neighbourhood Nursery was inspected the day before the children's centre. Outcomes, provision and leadership and management were judged to be good. These judgements were taken into account when inspecting the children's centre.

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 Yorkswood Children's Centre on 18 and 19 May 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Your children's centre is at the heart of the community and is relied upon for the well-being of large numbers of people. The good leadership and highly successful teamwork mean you and your families are provided with a wide range of good services tailored to meet your particular needs.

The centre is making a positive difference to your children's well-being and learning. It is making a particularly significant difference in helping them to experience a safe start to childhood. Your children have good opportunities to develop their play and learning within the centre and this is helping them to prepare for their next steps into nursery. They make good progress in their learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Thank you for contributing to the inspection. Your comments prove invaluable to inspectors. With the centre's encouragement, many of you now make a positive contribution to the centre's services and the life of the community. Your membership on the partnership advisory board and parents' forum are very important and help to shape the services that the children's centre provides. Those of you we spoke to were unanimous in your praise of the work of the centre and, in particular, the learning and development coordinator, children's centre support workers and family support workers. Some of you were really keen to tell inspectors about how well staff supported you and your families, helped to raise your self-esteem and confidence and encouraged you to achieve.

The centre currently undertakes visits to your home which allows you to access services easily. This service would be enhanced further if these visits were undertaken jointly with other professionals who already visit you such as health visitors. The care, guidance and support which the centre provides for you and your families are excellent. This is largely as a result of the extremely successful close partnerships that staff forge with yourselves and the way they engage you in the work they do with you. The good work of the staff from across the different agencies ensures that you access the right services as quickly as possible. Several of you believe that your contact with the centre has been life changing. Professionals working in multi-agency teams have developed good working partnerships with the children's centre. They spoke with high regard about the children's centre and the work of its support staff.

The leaders of the centre understand your families' needs extremely well. They have good systems to check that staff are doing a good job and that the services on offer

are making a positive difference to your lives. They show that they are determined to improve the lives of users even more.

We have asked the centre to work with the local authority to provide data promptly and to give better detail so that services can be tailored in respect of improving outcomes for children and users. These data will also help you to challenge the children's centre work.

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