

Inspection report for Hindpool Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Cumbria
Inspection number	383590
Inspection dates	20-21 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Allyson Ingall

Centre leader	Lisa Scott
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Hindpool Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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

Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

An inspection of the maintained nursery 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 the senior leadership team and staff, representatives of a wide range of partners, including early years, health and care professionals, local authority members and users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hindpool Children's Centre was originally extended from a maintained nursery school within Hindpool and is a Phase 1 centre and part of the former Sure Start programme. It is now part of a cluster of six designated and two linked children's centres in the Furness area managed by Action for Children. Hindpool provides the full core offer but shares resources and expertise with the other centres within the cluster. The centre manager and her team work across two sites and includes an on-site health team. The local area, the coastal town of Barrow, includes two communities within the top 10% of the most deprived areas within the country, with one ranked the highest. The majority of families are of White British heritage with a small percentage from ethnic minority backgrounds. Levels of worklessness and the number of families dependent on benefits are above average. Most children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with knowledge and skills which are below those typically expected for their age.

The centre is governed by the local authority. Support and guidance is provided by a local advisory group which consists of partner agencies, staff of the centre and parents and carers.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

'Hindpool Children's Centre feels like home and I would be lost without it', a view expressed by many users, sums up the key to this outstanding children's centre. With an extremely welcoming environment, friendly and supportive staff and liaison with a wide range of partners, the centre provides an outstanding service for all groups and excellent care, guidance and support. Leadership at all levels is outstanding and ensures that the development of provision is firmly rooted in continued, high quality and rigorous analysis of a range of available data. This ensures outstanding and highly focused provision and has a considerable impact on target groups and the key performance indicators. As a result, outcomes for children and adults in the area are outstanding.

The excellent emphasis on continuous learning, with many activities accredited and celebrated as part of the 'can do' culture, has ensured users significantly improve their own and their families lives. The excellent work supporting victims of domestic violence through the Recovery Toolkit programme, has ensured high levels of confidence and self-esteem of participants so that they report an ability to be better parents with observable and significant changes in their children: less anxiety, better routines, greater security and resilience. Parents, carers, and children feel very safe as a result of outstanding safeguarding systems which permeate all levels of work. The health and well-being of families is excellent. The centre has, for example, had a very significant impact on reducing hospital referrals.

Children thoroughly enjoy their learning experiences. The many exciting projects, such as the Respite programme, are rapidly reducing the gap between the lowest achievers and others. However the centre has identified a need to extend the range of data gathered from other providers in the later stages of the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure the centre has the maximum impact it can on children's long-term achievement.

The quality of provision is outstanding. The relentless commitment to continuous improvement and joint working across the cluster has ensured all target groups are identified and appropriately provided for and has led to some innovative partnerships and highly focused interventions. For example, the partnership with the fire service has both enabled access to the hardest-to-engage and targeted groups whilst reducing property fires by 40% since the partnership began.

The centre is managed by a centre leader under the governance of the local authority, which recently has been subject to reorganisation and restructuring. This has been exceptionally well managed by all members of this highly cohesive team to the extent that users report 'business as usual'. Internal and external monitoring shows that Hindpool Children's Centre has continued to improve throughout this time and that they have not just sustained their services but have considerably developed them. Along with sophisticated self-evaluation systems, the centre has demonstrated exceptional capacity to sustain improvements under the new structure.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further develop the approach to gathering and utilising data on children's progress throughout the later stages of their early years so that the centre can fully demonstrate the centre's impact on their future learning

How good are outcomes for families?

1

A high proportion of families, including those in challenging circumstances, throughout the area make extensive use of the centre's services and achieve excellent outcomes. Many users show high levels of enjoyment for the activities in the centre whilst demonstrating excellent learning. In particular, adults have made good progress in their learning, including many who have gained qualifications in literacy and numeracy, which have set them on the path to employment. In addition, adults report an ability to be better parents and have been able to build on the additional language development work undertaken by the centre. Outstanding progress has been achieved through a comprehensive range of services which focus on accelerating both language and social development. For example, Baby Talk, Communication Clinic, Wriggle and Rhyme and the full the Respite package for two-year olds, which funds nursery places for the most vulnerable, have made a significant impact on outcomes so that children are well prepared for the next phase of their education. Through consistency of approach and a highly effective partnership with the nursery, the achievement gap continues to be narrowed. Children are very happy and extremely well prepared for later learning. However, the centre has identified a need for increased data from other providers after they leave the nursery to confirm the excellent impact on their achievement.

The centre has an excellent impact on families' healthy lifestyle. For example, initiatives such as the Constipation Clinic, has led to successful potty parties in partnership with the health visitor. Obesity rates have rapidly and measurably been reduced and reflect the outstanding development of healthy lifestyles as a result of a range of activities particularly focused on early intervention. Parents and carers report that they have become very knowledgeable and confident about healthy eating, cooking, growing fruit and vegetables and the importance of exercise. Baby Wiggles is a very well attended group which sees the start of the All About Me learning journey completed by parents and which continues into the nursery. This increase in parents' and carers' skills is clearly evident as staff plan activities that have learning outcomes for the group which they share with parents and carers. Parents and carers also achieve excellent new learning through a wide range of highly enjoyable activities for themselves and their children, such as the Baby Massage session.

Individual and group support for breastfeeding mothers has been highly successful and has seen above average initiation rates. Those in the centre's target groups, such as teenage mothers, have made extremely good progress in breastfeeding and early parenting through a large number of successful projects. For example, the Parents with Prospects and Young Parents To Be, which involve high levels of support and aspiration through a nationally accredited programme. All participants report enjoyment and raised aspirations and now have a clear pathway with which they are being supported. 'If I didn't do the course, I wouldn't be where I am now,' is just one quote which demonstrates the result of this highly effective programme. In addition, preventative work to avoid subsequent pregnancies and address the high proportion of teenage pregnancies has been very successful.

The centre has had an excellent impact on children's and adults' safety. There has been significant reduction in admissions to accident and emergency departments, especially from fire-related incidents. This is a direct result of the centres partnership with the Fire Service and other partners. As a result of how safety is fully integrated into the centre environment, users are demonstrating an excellent understanding of how to ensure the safety of their families. There has been a significant reduction of children on child protection plans within the area. Recovery plans within the cluster have also resulted in improved, outcomes, including educational ones, for looked-after children.

Excellent outcomes for those who have left abusive partners have been achieved through the Recovery Toolkit and follow up support. One positive impact has been the doubling of domestic violence incidents reported to police as a result of the high profile given to the scheme. More significantly, there has been considerable reduction in repeat victims: only one out of seven who completed the programme returned to their abusive partner, well in excess of the original challenging target of 50%. 'If I hadn't done the course, I would've gone back to my partner' was a view endorsed by nearly all participants.

The effectiveness of the extremely well attended Dads' group has seen a rise in more male attendees at other events and activities, as dads respond to the 'father friendly environment'

that has been created. As the single father of one child with additional needs reported, 'I know support is constantly available'.

The centre provides excellent and carefully targeted support for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their parents and carers. For example, 'Playmax' sessions, which are targeted at children with additional needs, facilitate early identification and support and have eased transition to school. This has significantly improved the quality of their lives. As articulated by one parent and endorsed by many others, 'The children's centre relationship is constant and enduring...they are always there to talk to and share our concerns.... I would be at rock bottom without their support'.

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	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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	1
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.	1

How good is the provision?

1

'There's not an awful lot we can't do, we will find ways' expresses the prevailing attitude at Hindpool Children's Centre and which has resulted in excellent care, guidance and support. A very good balance between targeted and universal provision has been achieved through both careful analysis of need along with, creative and sustainable deployment of resources across the cluster. For example, Parenting Programmes are located in the centre as well as on a one-to one basis in the home. Both types operate a self-sustaining model which has seen increases in parents' confidence and parenting skills, such as assertiveness with their children's eating habits. The effectiveness of the centre's outreach work and especially, the Family Intervention Project in partnership with the police, has led to a reduction in callouts and reduced youth crime figures overall. Participation rates are high and increasing and the centre's registrations continue to rise because of the wide and varied provision, which continually adjusts to reflect current needs.

The quality of provision is outstanding. The centre knows its community extremely well and makes very good use of the views of parents and others to shape the activities to meet their

needs. The centre makes extremely good use of children's drawings and user views through 'Chat A Ways' parent forums, to plan future services. Users are also involved in the governance of the centre through the Parents' Forum and through representation on the Advisory Board. Excellent multi-agency cooperation and an expanding number of volunteers both sustain and enhance the quality of the centre's services and their ability to target and differentiate services. One such example is Armchair Aerobics for the elderly and infirm and a separate Aerobics group for 13-16 year olds, which also addresses positive imagery. Provision for disabled children and their families is highly inclusive yet differentiated to ensure all feel able to participate.

Safety is a high priority at Hindpool Children's Centre and is embedded at all levels to the extent that their claim that 'Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility,' is a reality. This is evident in the practical way the centre addresses the key issues it has successfully identified. For example, there are now no chip pan fires in Hindpool as a result of the unique Fire Service partnership which saw safer fryers distributed amongst the community. In addition, continued analysis of Accident and Emergency department admissions has recently shown a sharp rise in 'hair straightener burns' for children and so the centre is now funding and distributing safety sleeves.

The Narrowing the Gap project has had significant impact on transition to school and, in particular, the streamlining of information given to parents and carers. User feedback shows progress in communication, language and literacy as well as in personal and social education and there is some hard data to show progress with linking sounds and letters, especially for boys. The centre has identified and initiated increased sharing of progress data with the local school and other providers to sharply measure and build on these significant achievements.

Links are in place for users of both the Young Parents groups and The Recovery Toolkit participants which reflect their abilities and aspirations. For example, the Financial Futures programme and the Workers Education Association group empower well-being in adults, raise aspirations and give them the confidence to further their education. Jobcentre Plus also has longstanding and effective links with the centre, which encompass all aspects of the core offer and addresses some of the needs of those in workless households. This is enhanced by the Parent Information Point in the entrance hall of the centre which allows users direct access to the database of vacancies, benefit information and support.

The value placed by the headteacher of the local nursery school on the highly effective communication between themselves and the centre, in particular resulting directly from one of the shared staffing roles, has led to an 'almost instant response' for children with additional needs and those who speak English as an additional language. In addition, the effectiveness of the 'My Journey' aspect of the Respite pilot has been recognised by the local authority and is being rolled out as an excellent model for others to use.

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Centre leaders have an extremely clear vision for the centre, focused on inclusion and the desire for a one-stop shop for all users, which is shared and articulated by both staff and partners.

Monitoring and evaluation is excellent and the centre has rapidly built on recommendations from inspections of the other centres in the cluster. All members of staff are working towards their individual specialism and the buddy system is effective in supporting all staff whilst ensuring everyone, including key partners, works towards common goals. Flexibility is evident, in terms of both staff and location of services, which are responsive to the needs of users. Particularly excellent is the way in which the targeted group provision is focused, by analysing exactly which issues are to be addressed using both quantitative and qualitative data. The centre has a clear statement as to which data it collects and why. All members of staff understand that activities must have impact and are to be based on need rather than on want.

Centre staff claim that restructuring has streamlined and encouraged the service to become even more sustainable. They make very good use of the views of parents and others to shape the activities to meet their needs. For example, making use of children's drawings and views expressed through 'Chat A Ways' parent forums extremely well to plan future courses. This has led to a strong community feel and sense of ownership with the users of the centre who often refer to it as 'my' centre

Equality and diversity is addressed extremely well in terms of inclusion and the tackling of discrimination so that all groups are valued within the community. For example, the centre has responded well to suggestions from families from minority ethnic heritage for a multi-cultural cooking session, in partnership with a local centre. The centre has made significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap and is accelerating this process to find even more ways of overcoming some of the barriers to achievement.

The arrangements for safeguarding are outstanding. All legislative requirements are met or exceeded. Staff are well trained and have access to high levels of support and training. The effective implementation of policies and procedures ensure that staff and volunteers are

suitable to work with children and vulnerable adults. The excellent multi-agency working is promoting the swift exchange of information for the most vulnerable children, including those with Common Assessment Framework and Child Protection Plans. The recording of this information is very robust. Risk assessment procedures are conducted for all activities in the centre. The procedure for home visits and lone working is an example of good practice. The administrator at the centre is extremely vigilant and monitors visitors to the centre in addition to monitoring staff when they are lone working in the community.

Governance arrangements are excellent and the centre has managed a period of transition due to reorganisation very well. Overall, there is a consistency of approach which is understood by all and which does not rely on one or two key people to implement and understand. As a result, there is full involvement in the planning and evaluation cycle and accountability is built in at several levels, both internal and external. The local authority has given clearer timescales for monitoring and all members of staff are clear about their roles, responsibilities and contribution to overall aims and targets.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
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	1
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.	1

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

Information from the most recent Ofsted inspection of Hindpool Nursery School, URN 378421, and the related Daycare Centre has been taken into account when judging early years provision and outcomes.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hindpool Sure Start Children's Centre on 20 - 21 October 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you for your help and contribution to the inspection. It was especially good to hear from so many of you of how important the centre is to you and how it has helped you and your families. You told us how much you enjoy coming to the centre, how welcoming and non-judgemental the staff are and how you feel confident in being able to tell them anything. We have seen how many of your suggestions have been acted upon and how that makes you feel even more involved. We know you fully appreciate how the centre manages to make it possible for you to access services, whether by providing them close to where you live, offering transport or by bringing things to your home.

We heard how much you enjoy learning about how to help your children with their health, safety and development. We were pleased to see that the support you receive to help your children's speech and language has helped them to become ready for nursery school. Many of you told us how you experienced support for your own problems which you feel has now helped you to be better parents and carers. It is especially good that a high proportion of you have now been able to help and support others with things such as breastfeeding, domestic violence, constipation and healthy eating. It is also good that many of you take up the different learning opportunities provided by the centre and that you have certificates and qualifications which are helping you into employment.

For those of you with children with special educational needs and/or disabilities we heard that you find the centre a great support. We were also impressed with the number of dads who join in with activities. For those of you who have had your children at a young age, you told us that the centre has helped you look after your babies, whilst helping you to carry on learning. It was great to hear from so many of you who now know exactly what they want to achieve and that the centre is helping you to get there.

We know that the centre has helped your children make good progress with their language and personal development and we have now asked the centre to work out why this sometimes does not carry on into school.

Thank you for everyone who took the time to speak with us and we wish you every success in the future.

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