

Inspection report for Hunslet Children's Centre

Local authority	Leeds
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Date of previous inspection	Not Previously Inspected
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Linked school if applicable	108053 Hunslet St Mary's C of E Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY337544 Hunslet Children's Centre

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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 partner 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 the centre manager and leadership team, representatives of the local authority, parents and carers, the headteacher and staff from the partner primary school, health workers, the outreach team, and members of partner organizations including the police and Jobcentre Plus staff. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The Hunslet Children's Centre is a Phase 1 children's centre that provides the full core offer provision. Initially a local authority early years centre, which was purpose built in 1974, the provision became a designated children's centre in September 2006 in partnership with Hunslet St Mary's Primary School. Services delivered by the centre include early education integrated with childcare, family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services, and adult education. It operates from two sites, both of which provide day care. The main site, recently renamed the Rylestone site, offers 48 full-day care places for children aged three months to five years. The St Mary's site offers 24 morning and 24 afternoon sessional places for children aged three to five years within the Early Years Foundation Stage unit.

The centre serves the Hunslet area of Leeds, which has a high level of social deprivation. This is reflected in the needs of the majority of families attending the centre, many of whom are from the 30% most deprived households nationally. The centre manager and two deputy managers are responsible for the day-to-day running and strategic planning of the centre's activities. The local authority funds the centre and offers support and challenge to

the management team through performance management and operational targets. The vast majority of the families who use the centre are of White British heritage. However, the area's ethnic mix is dynamic, with a growing number of families accessing services and activities at the centre from Black, Asian and Eastern European heritage. Of the 522 children who are aged less than five years in the centre's reach area, 47% come from homes which are dependent on benefits and where no one is in work. Currently, 360 children are registered with the centre. The majority of children who enter the childcare provision at three years-of-age have knowledge and skills well below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy as well as personal, social and emotional development.

The centre offers families a range of support including healthy lifestyle advice, an individual counselling service, speech and language programmes from a speech and language therapist and baby development checks. The centre has close links with the local Jobcentre Plus whose link advisor provides individual advice and support to parents and carers seeking employment. Through links with Leeds City College the centre has delivered a range of courses and activities designed to support parents and carers back into employment.

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

Hunslet Children's Centre is a good and improving centre which offers an excellent level of care and guidance to families within its reach area. Parents and carers who use the centre are very positive about the benefits of attending and say such things as, 'The centre has helped me to turn my life around completely.' The exceptionally warm and welcoming rooms and friendliness of staff create a harmonious atmosphere that engages users well. In times of crisis, families know that staff are always there for them and feel exceptionally well supported. The centre builds on its successes and strives to improve the number of services on offer.

The centre leadership knows the families within their reach area well. Those who are vulnerable, for example Roma Traveller families, and those families who are new to England

are identified and supported and helped to integrate within the community, improving overall community cohesion and harmony. The needs of hard-to-reach groups within the community are clearly identified and provision to meet individual families' needs is of a good standard. As a result a significant proportion of families from this group engage with the centre. For example, staff are justifiably proud that 100% of teenage mothers have been in contact with the centre and 85% are currently attending group activities.

A strength of the centre is the good quality leadership provided by the centre manager and the leadership team which ensures the centre runs smoothly and effectively. The local authority is accountable overall for the centre's legal and financial requirements and offers a good level of support and challenge to centre leaders. Whilst data compiled by the local authority is used by the centre leadership to plan and develop services, it is not always used as effectively as it could be. As a result, although planning for new initiatives is good overall, better use of statistical data would improve this even further. Self-evaluation is rigorous and effective. Centre leaders have a clear plan for the future, which is contributed to by all centre staff and users as well as members of the advisory board. This, combined with a clear recognition of the centre's strengths and areas for improvement, demonstrates that the centre's good capacity to improve further.

Information for users of the centre is well managed, ensuring parents and carers are effectively signposted to where they can get advice from centre staff and outside agencies. For example, staff signpost parents to college courses where they can gain further qualifications. The centre has good links with the nearby Jobcentre Plus and Citizens Advice Bureau who both offer drop in sessions at the centre.

The centre has worked successfully with partners in health, education and the local police to improve outcomes for families within the reach area. Further innovative partnerships with housing officers are about to begin which will improve children's centre services further. However the centre has yet to develop effective links with midwives and, as a result, the promotion of breastfeeding is not as strong as it could be. Whilst centre leaders recognise this and have plans to improve provision in the future they have yet to be implemented. Through the work of the advisory board the views of parents are regularly sought and acted upon to exceptionally good effect.

Outcomes for families are good overall. Healthy lifestyles are promoted well. One parent commented that the healthy exercise and nutrition for the very young course 'HENRY' which he attended had enabled him to produce healthy and nutritious meals for his children on a budget. This had dramatically reduced his reliance on take away food. Children clearly enjoy the many activities offered by the centre both through its day-care provision, and stay and play sessions. As a result the majority make good and better progress developing academic and social skills often from very low starting points. Children are exceptionally well behaved in and around the centre, separating from parents happily and successfully at the start of the day. Safeguarding, welfare and child protection measures are effective and well monitored by the local authority and centre staff.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Use current data more consistently to inform planning of centre activities.
- Develop closer links with health care professionals in order to more effectively support breastfeeding throughout the reach area.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The vast majority of families with young children who attend the centre develop a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children healthy and safe. Childhood obesity is being effectively tackled through the promotion of good partnership initiatives such as the 'HENRY' course run in conjunction with health and social services. Individually targeted counselling services help adults cope with stress and anxiety in their daily lives. However, breastfeeding mums are not as well supported, as links with midwives are at an early stage of development. As a result the number of new mums continuing to breastfeed is lower than it could be. Children in day-care provision on both sites develop sound hygiene habits and good attitudes to learning through clear routines and a stimulating array of activities. Overall immunisation rates are generally above average for the area.

Case studies show clearly that the targeted support delivered by the centre has a positive impact on the emotional well-being of vulnerable parents and children, for example, those experiencing family breakdown and those with child-protection plans. Centre staff ensure that all children and their families are safe and protected through good safeguarding procedures. Children behave in ways that are very safe for themselves and others. For example, they are keen to tidy away toys in the play areas and show responsible attitudes to each other and staff. They develop a very good understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves safe. Staff supervise children well throughout the day ensuring their safety and welfare at all times. Through attending child-development courses such as 'Learn together' parents develop skills to improve their children's learning development and safety. Staff are health and safety aware and ensure materials and equipment in both day-care units are used safely. The centre's continuation of the principles and practice of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents initiative has been effective in developing parents' awareness of safety and boundary settings. One parent said, 'I am much more careful at home and outside now. I always make sure the safety gate is in place on the stairs.' Case studies show very effective impact and improved well-being and welfare for children, particularly those on child-protection plans.

Robust assessments and systems are in place to support and ensure the safety of vulnerable children and any adult in need. Early intervention through effective outreach ensures families are well supported and are able to gain access to vital services when needed. Early Years Foundation Stage data clearly shows that children make good progress from very low

starting points in developing knowledge and skills that will help them in the future. As a result the centre has made good progress in reducing the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and their peers. Services offered by the centre are popular and the various groups are regularly attended. Parents attending the activities for babies, such as the babies' play group agree that it has had a positive impact on their children's language development and social skills. Because of the development of strong links with the local primary school, all groups of children including those with additional needs are well prepared for transition into Reception class. Centre users have been successful in completing a range of courses to help them develop personal and social skills. For example, one parent who attended the English for speakers of other languages course said, 'I can talk to other mums now and am able to help my child to learn English as well.'

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and 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.	2

How good is the provision?

2

Staff work hard to promote the work of the centre through regular leafleting sessions at all four primary schools within the reach area. Centre staff also work with community groups and volunteers who run some of the groups, ensuring that services are of good quality and meet the needs of the children and families attending. For example, the new parents group was described by one mum as, 'A life saver. I don't feel so alone anymore.' The centre knows its users exceptionally well and services are adapted to meet the changing needs of the community.

A comprehensive range of procedures for assessing the needs of children and families are in place. Multi-agency working and information sharing such as 'team around the child' meetings mean that families benefit from tailored support from a range of agencies. Despite some recent challenges in staffing, outreach work is very well planned and clear targets for work are agreed between those involved. Case studies clearly demonstrate the positive impact of this work in bringing about changes for families. The Common Assessment Framework is effectively used for families who have been identified as having higher levels

of need. Activities are provided at the centres and other community venues and feedback from families is that the activities are enjoyable and beneficial.

Parents and their children are treated with respect and all are seen as individuals. Staff have excellent knowledge of the range of services available within the community, which ensures that parents and carers are signposted to the many services which exist. The centre has had much success in engaging teenage parents with five out of six within the reach area regularly attending centre activities. There are good links with the different groups within the community. Events such as the Diwali celebration are supporting this development further. The centre is warm, welcoming and attractively decorated with soft furnishings and drapes. As a result parents feel exceptionally at home in the environment and know that staff will always listen, particularly in times of need. Staff are aware of the hard-to-reach groups in the community and have been successful at engaging them in the work of the centre. The centre staff use their knowledge of the community to ensure that services continue to meet their needs.

Children make good progress often from low starting points because of the good standards of teaching and learning across the centre's provision. Parents who receive outreach work benefit from excellent individually tailored packages of support. They are actively involved in target-setting and in the reviewing of targets. Effective signposting ensures that parents continue to receive high quality support appropriate to their individual needs.

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	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The centre's leadership team is committed to improving outcomes for users. There is a strong ethos of joint working and this, along with the commitment to improvement, is shared by all centre staff. One parent commented that the centre was, 'just amazing at helping us all'. The knowledgeable and approachable leadership team ensures that staff at all levels have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Effective signposting and joint-working practice provide an integrated package of support to users across the local area. Services are offered at the centre and within the community directly by centre staff and through partner agencies and commissioned services. These resources meet users' needs well and improve outcomes for their families. The close relationship with neighbouring children's centres ensures that services are not duplicated and resources are shared, and this, along with good outcomes, ensures that the centre provides good value for money.

The governance arrangements for the centre are clear. Parents and partner agencies are

actively involved in the governance of the centre. Users' views are sought in a range of ways and these feed into shaping the centre's services. Staff are proactive in taking forward any parent issues to the appropriate forum. Evaluations are used to obtain feedback more formally from users and shape future services. The centre has a good volunteer scheme. Volunteers have a clear recruitment process and are supported in their area of work. Ongoing training and support build their skills and knowledge. Many are successful in obtaining paid employment or accessing further training.

Leaders understand the diversity of families within their reach area. There have been some notable successes, for example, in engaging pregnant teenagers and members of the Eastern European community. There is a strong focus on cultural diversity, and the use of culturally diverse resources is developing families' understanding of the wider community. The centre's focus on reducing the achievement gap between different groups has been successful. The centre identifies that some children have special educational needs and/or difficulties and an effective range of support is offered through links with outside agencies.

Services are evaluated through case studies, local knowledge, satisfaction surveys and some use of data. Although the centre is developing its use of data, systems are not yet sufficiently sophisticated to use it as effectively as it could be to plan future services. The centre is aware of this and is working to achieve this in order to further improve outcomes. Partner agencies contribute to the centre's self-evaluation, which is used effectively to set targets in the centre's action plan. Where specific targets are set, the centre is able to measure its success accurately. Safeguarding arrangements are good. Robust recruitment procedures ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers who work with the children. The centre provides a safe environment for users and risk assessments are securely in place and the safety of users is monitored. Effective joint-working arrangements and clear communication are having a positive effect on supporting families who need additional support or may be subject to child-protection plans.

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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use of ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which 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.	2

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

The day-care section on both of the children's centre sites are subject to their own inspections. The day-care provision known as Hunslet Children's centre at Rylestone was inspected on 2 August 2011. The day-care provision known as Hunslet Children's Centre at St Mary's was inspected at the same time as this inspection and the section 5 inspection of Hunslet St Mary's School. All reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hunslet Children's Centre on 9–10 November 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to say thank you to all the parents, carers and representatives from the centre's professional partners who took the trouble to come and tell us about the work they do. We would like to say a special thank you to the parents attending group sessions who gave up time to talk to us. You all gave us a positive picture of the centre, and what you said was very useful in making our final judgments.

At the core of the centre's work is the strong leadership provided by the centre manager and her team, which ensures the coordinated teamwork of the centre's staff and its professional relationship with partners. This means that the workers at the centre communicate well with each other and their feedback provides a good knowledge and understanding of the community's needs. Those of you who use the centre are much better now at staying safe and looking after your families. We know this because many of you told us of what you had learnt. We agree that the centre is a very welcoming place to come to and we can see why you feel so at home when you attend. Staff have worked hard to make it safe for you and your children.

The family support and outreach workers at the centre offer you good support and build positive relationships with you and your families. The centre works effectively with other agencies, such as the health service and social services in particular, to help children and families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Parents, carers and children benefit from the good provision provided by the children's centre. Some of you are keen to attend classes to improve your skills. These must be enjoyable because we noticed that there is regular attendance on these courses. Good-quality sessions are organised for you to improve your parenting skills and for your children to develop the basic skills they need for

the next stage in their learning. This means that you gain more confidence and expertise and your children are suitably prepared to start nursery school.

We were also exceptionally impressed by the behaviour of the children both in and around the centre and how the centre is at the heart of your community. We have found a few areas that require improvement and the centre managers are already aware of these. We are recommending that managers use the data they get to target services effectively for you, and to improve breastfeeding rates by working more closely with midwives. We believe that the staff at the centre know the reach area well and are very good at asking your opinions and providing the right services. We also know, as many of you told us, how exceptionally good staff are at caring for you and helping you, particularly in a crisis. We wish you all every success for the future.

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