

Inspection report for H.O.P.E. Children's Centre, Bromyard

Local authority	Herefordshire
Inspection number	386951
Inspection dates	20–21 December 2011
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	H.O.P.E. for Children and their Families EY333183

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

Report published: January 2012



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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.

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, centre staff, partner agencies, parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies, and minutes of management meetings.

Information about the centre

Holistic Opportunities for Play and Education (H.O.P.E.) Children's Centre is situated in a rural market town. The centre operates from two purpose-built buildings of which the latest has been occupied only since May 2011. The centre was designated as a phase two children's centre in 2006 and serves the community in one of the 20% most disadvantaged areas in the country. The area is served by a number of local amenities. It has six primary schools and one secondary school.

The local ward is made up of a population 4,936 people. The number of families with children under five years old is 402, of which the centre serves 335. The area has above-average unemployment. A total of 1,334 people within the ward are on a state benefit, are unemployed, or are lowest grade workers. There are 60 lone parents within the reach area. The children's centre serves a community that is 97.6% White British, with the remaining population being from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly from Eastern European heritage and Travellers.

The centre meets its core purpose through offering of a range of integrated services which include health services, family support and adult training. The centre provides early years childcare for children from birth to four years old. It operates from 8.00am to 6.00pm for 51 weeks of the year and provides a holiday play scheme for children up to the age of 10 years. It offers advice and guidance to parents on the

day-care and childminding facilities available within the local community. Children begin school or nursery with skills and knowledge which are mostly in line with expectations for their age, although their communication and language development is well below that expected for their age.

The children's centre is managed by the charitable organisation H.O.P.E. for Children and their Families on behalf of the local authority. The partnership advisory board is made up of a cross-section of professionals and parents. It is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of the centre and its strategic development.

The centre works in partnership with a wide variety of professionals including health services, police, early years providers including schools, social care and adult education providers to deliver a universal and targeted programme to meet the local community's needs.

The daily bus service to Bromyard is limited to links with the main cities of Hereford and Worcester. The last bus returns to Bromyard at 5.45pm with not another until 9.20pm, making access to work and further education further afield difficult.

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

This highly respected and valued children's centre plays a significant role in the life of the community and serves the needs of the population well. Effective leadership, good team-working, excellent partnerships and strong community involvement have resulted in Bromyard having a good-quality provision where everyone is welcomed, included and valued.

Leaders are reflective and the centre has successfully identified areas for improvement. The advisory board has recently been reinstated. However, there is not enough representation of parents and partners and not all have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities so that it is able to support and contribute to the development of the centre's services effectively. The quality of data available to the centre is variable. For example, the centre does not have access to

all of the local data such as live births, and some data are county-wide which inhibits accurate strategic planning and targeting of resources. National data are not used consistently to target and address areas of concern.

The centre's vision of encouraging parents to be aspirational is supported well by the good-quality learning and development experiences provided. As a result, parents develop skills, such as literacy and numeracy, which lead them on to further learning and employment. The H.O.P.E. charity shops and the on-site cafe run by parents and members of the community provide a source of income for the centre and work experience for adults. Local enterprise is encouraged through parents renting workshops or parts of a shop, for example, to run a hairdressing business or sell goods they make as a result of attending the sewing and craft sessions. Consequently, families are developing economic stability and independence as they make a positive contribution to the community.

Inclusion is central to the vision of the centre and all staff have a commitment to promoting equality and diversity. The centre is meeting the elements of its core purpose well and is particularly successful in its targeted work to support children and families who are in most need of support. Highly effective inter-agency working with skilled professionals means that they identify the needs of potentially vulnerable families at an early stage and intervene quickly. This prompt action and good use of the Common Assessment Framework ensure efficient use of resources and reduce the number of children subject to child protection plans. Consequently, the centre is making a considerable improvement to the lives of children and families who are accessing the services. Overall, safeguarding arrangements are good.

The outcomes for children and adults within the centre's reach area are good. The users make an outstandingly positive contribution to the community, particularly through their voluntary work at the centre. Parents participate enthusiastically in activities and courses which build their confidence and develop their parenting skills. Babies and children who attend the centre's play sessions and crèche facilities benefit particularly from focused support and a good range of play opportunities that help develop their communication and social skills.

Excellent partnership working with others in the community, including general practitioners and health workers, social care, adult learning, the police, housing association, the church and the local council, is a particular strength of the centre. These very effective partnerships ensure that families are given good care, appropriate information and support tailored to their individual needs.

The centre knows the families and community very well. Users say they feel safe at the centre and many say it is their first port of call if they face difficulties. Families across all groups within the community evaluate activities routinely and their thoughts, ideas and aspirations are valued by the centre. Their views are included at all levels of decision making. Where users make requests for services, the centre strives to provide them, for example, extending the range of play sessions at the centre. Users say they feel listened to and respected.

The chief executive officer, supported by trustees, staff, volunteers and the community has inspired and driven the significant development of the centre's presence and role within the community. The centre has evolved from a voluntarily run family drop-in centre to a purpose-built complex employing 36 staff. It provides childcare and opportunities for training and employment, and supports 14 volunteers. The charity has been innovative and resourceful in accessing funding to sustain and expand all services. The centre demonstrates that it has good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Obtain more precise data about the needs of the reach area and use these to track, monitor and evaluate services in order to plan and shape services to meet the community's needs even more effectively.
- Improve the effectiveness of the advisory board in supporting and contributing to the development of the centre's services through:
 - increasing membership of key agencies, partners and parents
 - improving members' knowledge regarding their roles and responsibilities.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Users are enthusiastic about the centre's promotion of healthy eating through the 'Healthy Cooking on a Budget' sessions. Parents acknowledge that their children's attitudes to healthy eating have improved. Universal services are improving children's and adults' health, for example through the breastfeeding advice and support, and the intensive family support relating to drug, alcohol and mental health issues. Staff are good role models in promoting healthier lifestyles, particularly in their commitment to quitting smoking and losing weight.

Good procedures are in place to ensure that children are safeguarded. Staff have secure knowledge, are well trained and adopt safe practices. They work effectively with key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. Those on child protection plans are well supported. The Common Assessment Framework is implemented effectively. As a result, the number of children on child protection plans has reduced. A satisfactory range of activities is provided to promote adults' and children's awareness of road safety and accidents within the home.

The high-quality on-site early years provision promotes children's learning and development very well. Consequently, children make good progress and the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest is narrowing. Effective systems for tracking children's progress on entry into the early years provision and on to school are in place. However, the systems to track children's progress during drop-in sessions are not fully developed. Staff provide strong role models that support children's positive behaviour, and a culture of respect is clearly evident throughout the centre. Parents are developing their understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage through the 'Stay and Play' and 'Baby Days' sessions and are encouraged to

support their children's learning at home.

Parents and children are actively encouraged to have their say and have been very involved in decision making from the outset. Staff use innovative ways, including a social networking site, to obtain users' views. Evaluations of activities, discussions with parents, and individual case studies indicate that activities and support have made a positive difference to parents' own and their children's well-being.

The effective partnership working with Jobcentre Plus ensures that adults have access to daily information regarding job vacancies and that they are supported well in accessing other information such as through 'work clubs'. Combined with the good-quality range of adult-learning opportunities, including literacy, numeracy, computer and craft classes, adults are supported and prepared well for moving into further learning, volunteer work and employment, including self-employment. The centre is successfully reducing unemployment and, consequently, improving the life chances of the children and families within its reach.

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

The centre team knows and understands its community well and works very effectively with its partners to improve the life chances and personal development of parents and children. Parents expressed appreciation of the support they receive and of the positive changes that have resulted for their children and themselves. For example, parents comment on how they would have been homeless and, therefore, without their children, and how they have gained confidence and friendships and feel less isolated. Partners commented positively on the centre's work with Traveller families as being 'just superb'. As a result, these families are accepted and included within the community and are accessing services, and their children attend school.

Staff promote children's learning and development well. The assessment of needs

and the tracking of progress for families receiving one-to-one targeted support are good. The progress of all vulnerable families is documented well and is monitored carefully. The centre has very good links with family and children's services and, through these, it provides effective support for the most vulnerable groups, such as teenage parents, lone parents and families in crisis.

The centre is increasingly successful in meeting the needs of the wider community, particularly those families who are isolated and vulnerable. All groups are served well. Outreach work is given high priority. All families registered at the centre access a range of services.

Good relationships with local early years providers enable them to work well together to support vulnerable children and families. Families most in need receive funded early years sessions. Many children and their families have low starting points to learning which are sensitively assessed and supported with tailored learning opportunities as a result of the strong partnership working between the centre, training team and local authority. The crèche provision supports parents well in being able to access these courses. A number of parents have achieved further qualifications and moved into employment, including seven parents now employed at the centre and parents running their own businesses as a result of the skills learnt at the centre.

Effective multi-agency working provides regular opportunities for parents to access professionals and other agencies during drop-in sessions. For example, the training team and housing association provide information and advice to those needing help with computer skills, benefits, training or employment. Consequently, families are improving their economic stability and independence and outcomes are improving well.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

A strong and experienced board of trustees plays a major role in determining the strategic direction of the centre. Leaders have demonstrated their ability and commitment to improve outcomes and provision through their success in creating and developing an all-purpose community centre, driven by local people. Leaders have a clear understanding of what has worked well and what they need to do next to secure improvement for their community.

The chief executive officer and the operations manager provide good leadership and management for the centre. They are supported by a very committed team which delivers a good-quality service to the families in their reach area. Users and partner agencies expressed how highly valued staff are. For example, one partner stated, 'The chief executive officer is superb, she enthuses all her staff and goes that extra mile to make things happen.' He described the centre's success as being, 'a massive benefit to the society'. Others talked passionately about how the staff go the extra mile to support and help families and how much the staff care and can be trusted.

Staff are supported well with their professional development through a robust system of performance management. Staff are well trained and fully understand their roles and responsibilities. The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the centre's vision; equality is promoted, diversity celebrated and discrimination tackled effectively. Families are unconditionally accepted and given hope and encouraged to believe in themselves. Users with disabilities are supported well. The centre is making a strong contribution to community cohesion through the excellent partnership working with professionals and members of the community. It works successfully with, for example, the local church and housing association, to run events such as open days to promote the centre's activities. Inspectors observed a real buzz of enjoyment and participation of families during the open day. Families willingly shared their views on how much the centre had improved their confidence, helped them form new friendships, enabled them to become socially accepted within the community and supported them in achieving qualifications.

Safeguarding is a high priority and at the heart of what the centre does. The safety of children and their families is embedded in the ethos of the centre. Staff are effective in ensuring children and families are safe. There is rigorous attention to child protection, vetting and recruitment procedures.

Governance is good and improving. There are clear links between strategic planning and development, and service provision. Resources are used well overall, given the challenge of reaching families who live in isolated villages. Leaders successfully tap into and secure funding wherever possible and increase its impact by training and using volunteers. The centre provides good value for money.

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 in setting 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,	2

illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	
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	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	2

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

The on-site nursery provision was inspected in 2009 and judged as outstanding

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the H.O.P.E. Children's Centre, Bromyard on 20 and 21 December 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents.

This highly respected and valued children's centre plays a significant role in the life of the community and serves the needs of the population well. Effective leadership, good team-working, excellent partnerships and strong community involvement have resulted in good-quality provision and a centre where everyone is welcomed, included and valued.

The leaders and their dedicated team provide you and your families with a good range of services that are carefully tailored to meet your particular needs. Some aspects of the centre's work are stronger than others. For example, excellent partnership working with others in the community, such as health workers, social care, adult learning, the police, housing association and the church, is a particular strength of the centre. These very effective partnerships ensure that your families are given good care, guidance and support and you are safeguarded well. The centre is particularly successful in its targeted work to support children and families who are in most need of support.

The centre's vision of encouraging parents to be aspirational is supported well by the good-quality learning and development experiences provided. As a result, you are developing skills, such as literacy and numeracy, which lead you on to further learning and employment. The H.O.P.E. charity shops and the on-site cafe run by parents and members of the community provide a source of income for the centre and work experience for adults. The centre is particularly good at promoting and encouraging local enterprise. For example, it rents out workshops or parts of a shop so that you are able to run a business or sell goods you make as a result of attending the sewing and craft sessions. Consequently, you are developing economic stability and independence.

The outcomes for children and adults within the centre's reach area are good. You make an outstandingly positive contribution to the community, particularly through your voluntary work at the centre. You participate enthusiastically in activities and courses which build your confidence and develop your parenting skills. The crèche provision supports you in being able to access these courses well. Babies and children who attend the centre's play sessions and crèche facilities benefit particularly from focused support and a good range of play opportunities that help develop their communication and social skills.

Those of you who use the centre are now more aware than you were before of how to stay healthy and to provide for your families. Staff provide you with access to training, such as cooking, and give advice on how you can prepare healthy meals on a budget. They also provide you with training and information to help you understand how to meet the needs of your children.

The centre knows the families and community very well. You say you feel safe at the centre and many say it is your first port of call if you face difficulties. Families across all groups within the community evaluate activities routinely, and your thoughts, ideas and aspirations are valued by the centre. Your views are included at all levels of decision making. Where you make requests for services, the centre strives to provide them, for example, extending the range of play sessions at the centre. You say you feel listened to and respected.

Those of you who spoke to us said that you feel the centre is supportive and staff are kind and caring, and give you advice. Most importantly, you said it helps improve your lives, particularly for those of you who are feeling isolated or vulnerable. All staff place importance on you and your families' welfare and provide a listening ear for you. They are keen to create a warm and welcoming environment where you feel safe and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre.

Leaders have a clear understanding of what has worked well and what they need to do next to secure improvement for their community. The advisory board has recently been reinstated; however, there are not enough members at present and not all are fully aware of what they need to do to be able to support and contribute to the development of the centre's services more effectively. Therefore, we have asked the

local authority and centre leaders to increase the membership of key agencies, partners and parents and to provide training to improve members' knowledge regarding their roles and responsibilities.

Leaders, staff and partners know the community very well and continue to look at innovative ways to try to reach the most excluded families. The quality of data available to the centre is variable. For example, the centre does not have access to all of the local data such as live births, and some data are county-wide. As a result, the centre does not always have sufficient information to help it to draw up accurate plans and target the use of resources in the most efficient way. However, some national data that are available are not used consistently to target and address areas of concern. Therefore, we have asked the local authority and leaders to obtain more precise data about the needs of the area and to use these to track, monitor and evaluate services in order to plan and shape services to meet the community's needs even more effectively.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak to us. It was a privilege to be able to talk to you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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