

Inspection report for Whitby & District Children's Centre

Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	383851
Inspection dates	19 - 20 April 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	121353 Stakesby Community Primary 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.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk

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

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. Discussions were held with parents and service users and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Whitby and District Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in March 2006. It is managed by the local authority and is situated adjacent to Stakesby Community Primary School. It provides services from the main site and from four satellite sites. The centre serves a population which lives within the 70% least deprived areas in the country, with pockets of relative deprivation.

The centre provides services for families within the central and western parts of Whitby and also across a large rural area. The proportion of children aged under four years who are living in households where no-one is working is around the national average. The vast majority of families within the area served by the centre is of White British heritage.

The centre provides a wide range of supporting services, incorporating a crèche, outreach and home visiting, parenting courses, volunteering opportunities and workshops. The centre has a steering group made up of representatives from the local community, professional agencies and parents. Most children enter early years provision with a range of skills lower than those expected for their age.

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

Whitby and District Children's Centre meets the needs of its users well. A large majority of families in the Whitby area is registered with the centre. Attendance rates at the centre and its many other early years services in the community are good and increasing. The staff team understand thoroughly the needs of each individual user and make it their highest priority to use this information skilfully and sensitively to improve outcomes.

The centre's main site is used to its full capacity and the centre leaders recognise there is a need to create more space so that more families can benefit from the provision, especially those who live in isolated rural areas. The centre offers good support to families and young children.

The centre has good capacity to improve because there is a sharp focus on performance to ensure that families with the greatest needs receive high quality support. In addition, the whole staff and leadership team are self-critical and constantly search for ways to do things better. The centre knows its communities well and understands their needs.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Staff have good knowledge and experience in safeguarding children, which they use effectively to ensure that families feel safe at the centre, at home and when out in the community. Families who face the greatest challenges and those with complex needs are very well-supported because staff work very effectively with health partners and the local authority. The centre and its key partners work very well to provide high quality services to families with children subject to child protection plans, the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and those looked after by the local authority. Protocols for sharing information are kept under constant review to ensure that families in most need of support are quickly identified.

Supporting the development of communication and language is a priority in Whitby. The centre works effectively with speech and language therapists and other experts to help

parents increase their awareness of the importance of listening to and talking to their children. Transition is supported well and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores show steady improvement. The gap between the lowest 20% of children's scores and the rest is successfully narrowing, although it is still lower than the national average. Children are generally better prepared for school, although scores in communication, language and literacy are lower than national and regional levels. The centre does not measure successfully enough the effectiveness of its contribution to improving these scores.

The local authority provides the centre with detailed information and data about the population it serves, which it uses well to prioritise work. The centre has become very well-established and has a positive reputation in the community for making real differences to people's lives. Families visiting the centre enter a warm and inviting atmosphere, where they are welcomed and made comfortable. Families who use the centre are empowered to make important decisions and changes which have significant, lasting benefits.

The staff team have good experience and have a good understanding of the needs of families experiencing challenges. A high priority is given to the promotion of health and well-being. Early intervention with additional support is provided effectively where the need is identified. Each activity is well-planned to ensure that outcomes for those using the centre are improved. The centre works very creatively to provide services in rural communities. It makes very good use of village halls and school sites to ensure that many families in rural isolation can engage and benefit from the centre's work.

Partnership arrangements are strong and effective with all key partners. The local authority and health partners use their expertise to ensure that all services are thoroughly integrated and very well-co-ordinated. The centre provides a broad range of courses and programmes to stimulate further interest in child development and parenting. The centre gives a satisfactory level of service to adults interested in training and education and recognises that this is an area to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to increase the number of families registered with the centre to ensure that more people, especially those from rural areas, benefit from the services available.
- Improve Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores by introducing effective monitoring arrangements to ensure the centre's contribution is measured, analysed and continually reviewed.
- Improve the level of service offered to adults interested in training and education to further improve economic stability for families.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Effective collaboration with health visitors and midwives ensures that families receive immediate, professional advice on many issues including breastfeeding and weaning. Health professionals promote the centre's services well and this ensures that all new parents are made aware of the support available and the full programme of events on offer. Effective working with many partner organisations ensures that the obesity rate in the Whitby area is decreasing.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted well at the centre in sessions such as 'Little Green-fingers' where families learn the benefits of gardening. One parent told us, 'There is so much to do at the centre and staff keep you busy doing new things.' Parents benefit from effective encouragement and guidance from the centre staff which helps them make important decisions about immunisations, exercise and diet. The outside areas are used very well for activities such as nature walks and growing flowers.

Children learn to manage and take risks safely through play and exploration. The centre is a safe place and children behave in ways that are safe for themselves and each other. The majority of parents improve their parenting skills and have confidence to share any concerns with staff. The CAF process is very well-understood by the staff and used effectively. There are significant improvements to the quality of life for all users and particularly so for groups with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Targeted groups are served well by the centre. Fathers are targeted effectively and become positive role models in the community.

Parents make good progress in their personal development, well-being and self-confidence. Adult education and family learning sessions enable those who participate to make positive and significant improvements to their lives. However, although the number of adults achieving accredited qualifications is improving, it remains low and the centre does not adequately monitor the progress of adult learners so as to help them take their next step in education or training. Opportunities for volunteering at the centre are well-structured and parents are able to gain very useful work experience.

Parents are well supported to express their views about how the centre is managed and are very active in their work on the advisory board and parents' forum. Parents who felt isolated within the community thrive at the centre and begin to demonstrate positive behaviour and develop positive relationships. One parent told us 'Attending the centre helps me to get out more and make friends.'

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	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	3

How good is the provision?

2

The centre has high expectations of its users and provides a good range of services which match the changing needs of the community. The staff are very experienced and quickly establish effective relationships with families. The centre has well-integrated services which are effective in ensuring that arrangements to monitor and promote good health and help children learn and develop are of high quality.

The centre works very effectively with health partners and the local authority to provide home visits. The whole staff team works very effectively to ensure that the centre remains focused on its priorities. They have a 'can-do' attitude and are well-regarded by those who use the centre because of their determination to recognise and understand users' needs.

The centre and its partners are skilled at assessing needs, which ensures the challenges faced by families or individuals can be approached sensitively and overcome wherever possible. Support is tailored well to meet individual need and family circumstances, and staff value families' evaluation and feedback which ensures that services are continually improved.

Staff are successful in engaging users, particularly those whose needs are greatest. They ensure that programmes are available and accessible for users with additional needs or disabilities. One parent said: 'The centre has helped me understand and come to terms with my child's disability.' All users at the centre are recognised for their individuality. They are made to feel special and this supports the development of individuals and families.

The centre and its staff have a significant impact on the improvement of early years services throughout the community. They share their expertise and provide strong support to help other providers including childminders develop and improve. There is a strong focus on improving the Early Years Foundation Stage scores in particular supporting children's personal, social and emotional development. However, most children enter early years provision with a range of skills lower than expected for their age in their communication, language and literacy. In addition, the centre does not yet have fully effective monitoring arrangements to measure, analyse and review its contribution.

Staff are trusted and users have confidence in their professionalism and the effective support they give. Families using the centre receive good care and the staff team and their partners provide personalised support which is effective. User participation rates are good and increasing and evaluations of the centre are very positive.

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	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements are highly visible, well-established and very effective. The steering group is very committed and determined to ensure that the centre improves outcomes for those who attend. The centre leader is very well-regarded especially for improving the quality of services since she joined the centre in 2010. Strategic planning strongly reflects local and regional priorities and is heavily influenced by a determination to ensure that everyone succeeds. The local authority provides good support to ensure that the centre continues to improve. The centre leader has a clear vision for how the centre is to develop. She makes sure everyone knows how well they are doing and what is to be done to improve.

All staff and volunteers receive high-quality training and support in their work. Appraisals are effective and professional supervision is used to ensure that child protection and support services are of the highest standards. The centre is performing well and is making good progress towards exceeding the majority of targets set for it by the local authority.

The use of data to help target groups facing the greatest challenges is effective and well-developed. There is effective evaluation, careful analysis and self-challenge. The centre fulfils all of its statutory duties, has full support of the community and provides good value for money. The effectiveness of partnerships to integrate services and improve outcomes for families is strong. The vast majority of partnerships has well-established quality assurance and improvement initiatives which make sure they remain effective.

Safeguarding arrangements are thoroughly well-developed and very effective. All staff have been subject to a Criminal Records Bureau check and have good levels of awareness in child-protection procedures. Comprehensive procedures and guidance for safe recruitment are followed closely. The centre works in partnership very effectively with a range of agencies to protect children and vulnerable adults. In addition, staff provide good advice and access to expert help for those experiencing domestic violence.

Everyone is made to feel very welcome at the centre. Equality and the inclusion of all children and their families are promoted effectively. Users with high levels of need are targeted very effectively and become the focus of well-co-ordinated support.

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 secures 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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Whitby and District Children's Centre on 19-20 April 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We enjoyed our visit to your centre and wish to thank those of you who helped us with our inspection work.

Throughout our visit the people we met were very enthusiastic in telling us how the centre had helped them. The children's centre provides a good range of services which help children and families to learn, play together and have fun.

We really enjoyed speaking to you about what you have learnt at the centre and how it has changed what you do at home for the better. We were particularly impressed by the case studies that clearly showed the difference that the centre is making.

The centre is working very closely with many organisations such as health, schools and social care professionals to improve the range of services that are available to you.

We found the centre to have many strengths, including the opportunities for so many of you to get involved in helping your children read. We also saw how the centre takes action to support you and your children's safety and well-being.

We also saw how effectively you are helping to run the centre, both as volunteers and through the parents' forum and steering group. The centre also helps many people to make better choices about diet and exercise which has had a strong impact on improving lifestyles.

Many children make good progress from their starting points because there is a wide range of interesting and challenging activities. This is especially evident in their personal, social and emotional development and helps prepare them well for the move to school. However, we have asked the centre to provide better support and monitoring for children's communication, language and literacy development.

The centre offers an increasing range of programmes aimed at improving the health of people in your local communities. Home visits are important for some you who live in isolated areas and you told us how valuable these are. We have asked the centre to do more to ensure that even more families benefit from the centre's services, especially those who live in very remote areas.

The centre is very good at helping new mothers who choose to breastfeed their babies. It tells them about the help available on breastfeeding from those of you who have successfully breastfed your own children.

Some parents explained just how important the centre is in their family's lives. They told us that staff listen to them and help them to get the right help and support. The support is provided quickly and professionals work closely together to support families and children. This includes teenage parents and families with disabled people.

We found the arrangements to keep you and your families safe to be good. The parents we spoke to describe the centre as providing a safe and welcoming environment; they are confident that their children will be secure and well cared for. We found that the care, guidance and support provided for families is good. The centre leader has very strong procedures to make sure that staff and volunteers are well-trained and suitable to work with you and your children.

We have asked the centre to provide more opportunities and advice for those of you who want support to learn new skills or increase your education. The centre has shown that it is

successful and has made big improvements to the lives of many people. The staff at the centre do whatever they can to make sure that families enjoy themselves and benefit from the courses and groups.

Thank you once again for sharing your views with us. We wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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