

# Inspection report for Wensleydale Children's Centre

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Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	383847
Inspection dates	30 - 31 May 2012
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Centre leader	Sue Shippen
Date of previous inspection	Not Applicable
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Linked school if applicable	121602 Askrigg Voluntary Controlled 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the local authority, members of the steering committee and parents' forum, a broad range of users and a number of partners, including health and social care. They observed sessions at the centre and other venues, attended outreach visits and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Wensleydale Children's Centre is a phase two centre and provides the full core purpose. It is situated in a rural area covering approximately 20 miles of the Yorkshire Dales. It includes the market town of Leyburn and many outlying hamlets, villages and farmhouses. It is located within the grounds of Askrigg Primary School and opened in 2009.

The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre. The governance of the centre is provided by the local authority through a steering group. The steering group consists of representatives from partner organisations and key stakeholders that work with the centre, the local authority and the parent's forum.

The centre has 450 children aged from birth to five years in its reach area. The majority of families are of White British heritage. A small, but increasing, number of families are from Eastern Europe including Poland and Lithuania. The proportion of children from families in receipt of benefits and in homes where no one works is similar to national averages and in some parts of the reach area is higher. The number of lone parents in the area is close to the national average. A high proportion of families are involved in rural/agricultural occupations and live in privately rented or housing association accommodation. When they

start early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities that are broadly typical for their age.

The centre provides on-site 'Stay and Play' and crèche facilities. It also provides a wide range of on-site services such as baby weighing, baby massage, parenting and adult learning courses and outreach support. The centre also provides 'Stay and Play' and other childcare facilities in an increasing number of venues across its reach area.

## 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

Wensleydale Children's Centre meets the needs of its community well and provides a good service. The centre manager's clear vision and the sense of purpose of all those involved with its governance, is driving the centre forward well. A good and constantly increasing proportion of families make effective use of the centre's facilities to improve their lives. Effective partnership and outreach services lead to good outcomes for all target groups, including those in with circumstances that make them vulnerable, and as a result, the centre has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

A strength of the centre is that it listens well to the voice of the local community and makes good use of available information to ensure that it provides what is most needed. In particular, the centre's impact on children's learning and development has contributed well to narrowing the gap between the lowest achievers and the rest by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Breastfeeding and immunisation rates are good. Although the centre's impact on the outcomes for families is generally good, local data to show its full impact, for example on smoking cessation, is sometimes limited.

Through good support and outreach work, families who are considered most at risk receive timely intervention and support. This has had a particularly positive impact where there are mental health and isolation concerns. The centre has responded well to the different needs of the large reach area by establishing key activities such as 'Stay and Play' in different venues in response to parental requests and by helping with transport needs. The centre

itself provides a bright, warm and welcoming environment and this encourages parents to seek out support for many aspects of their lives. The provision of good quality crèche and other childcare provision enables parents to take advantage of the wide range of parenting and other courses on offer. This has a positive impact on the economic well-being of many groups of users helping them into employment or volunteering activities. However, the take-up of literacy and numeracy training is less well established.

The centre is inclusive and promotes equality and tackles diversity well. For example, courses in English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) are well attended. A good commitment to safeguarding by all staff ensures children and their families are safe. Parents receive good support, training and resources for keeping their families safe. As a result this has helped to reduce hospital accident and emergency admissions. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well to support those with circumstances that make them vulnerable and the centre promotes good outcomes for disabled users and those who have special educational needs.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- In partnership with adult learning services increase the opportunities for users to take literacy and numeracy qualifications.
- Work with the local authority, health services and other partners to ensure that the centre has access to timely, accurate and precise data for the reach in order to fully measure its effectiveness and plan future developments.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre works in close partnership with health services and promotes outcomes well. The many activities aimed at promoting good eating and exercise habits have a very positive effect. Levels of obesity for children aged five in the centre's reach area have consequently fallen well over the last three years and are below the national averages at 6.8%. The centre has worked in close partnership with a sports organisation to provide a good range of physical activities, especially in school holidays, to raise fitness levels for adults and children. General family health issues are tackled well. For instance, the role of the Parent Support Advisor, targeted information through leaflets delivered to individual families and information provided at well attended baby weighing sessions make a good contribution to well above average immunisation rates for children.

The centre effectively supports mothers in well attended classes on breastfeeding and weaning through its 'Dale's Babies'. This is a very good example of how the centre listens and acts on the views of parents across the reach to create a bespoke programme of support where it is needed. Overall, rates of breastfeeding are above national levels at 78%

and 46% for those who sustain this beyond six weeks. However, the centre is sometimes inhibited in ensuring that it is having a maximum impact because up-to-date, local comparative data through the health and other services are sometimes limited for the reach area. The centres own consultation processes with users, which are imaginatively collated by the centre manager, are beginning to address this issue. As a result, health outcomes are good overall.

The many courses to support children's early learning and development make a good contribution to their enjoyment and achievement. 'The Music Man', 'Stay and Play' and many other parent and child activities give adults good levels of skills and understanding of the value of play as a tool for learning. The standards children reach by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are now above the national average at 74% following a three year trend of improvement. A very close working partnership with the linked school, particularly the early years staff, means that the gap between the lowest achieving children and others is reducing faster than it is nationally and is 24% as opposed to a national average of 31%. Consequently, children are well prepared for their future learning. In addition these sessions also provide very valuable personal and social support for adults in often quite isolated circumstances to build relationships and friendships. 'It is very good to have somewhere like this to come and meet others, it helps to stop you feeling isolated,' is typical of the views expressed.

Through the effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and good quality interventions for disabled children and those with special educational needs or who may otherwise be vulnerable, ensure they successfully achieve beyond normally expected levels. A high proportion of such families make use of the centre's provision. The Parent Support Advisor successfully works closely with health services to identify any mental health issues, such as post-natal depression, which may be exacerbated by the isolation in parts of the community. Several families have been successfully helped to manage their concerns and improve their lives. A good proportion of fathers attend many of the centre's courses particularly those offering practical parenting and other skills. Several of those who received this support have gone on to achieve qualifications and work as a direct result of contact with the centre. In particular, some of the centre staff have progressed through this pathway. This has made a good contribution to these families's economic well-being. Many parents take roles on the parents' forum and the steering committee. Their views are routinely and rigorously gathered at all points of their contact with the centre. They are listened to and their views acted upon, which they respect. However, despite good partnership work with course providers, a limited number of users have taken opportunities to further improve their literacy and numeracy skills and data to target support is relatively limited.

Children's behaviour and safety is well promoted. They are happy and purposefully busy throughout the 'Stay and Play' and other activities. The effectiveness of the centre's training for all staff means that those subject to a child protection plan, looked after children and the families who care for them, are kept safe and helped to move forwards. The centre has taken successful initiatives to support children who may be at risk through circumstances of domestic abuse and relieve pressure for the whole family. For example, support and

education on alcohol abuse, and credit management alongside a strong partnership with local charities has a positive impact on families' well-being.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.</b>	<b>2</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

The procedures for registering and monitoring all users contact with the centre are good overall and lead to careful targeting of services. The quality and use of assessment to support all aspects of its work are good overall. The centre analyses all its activities by its impact. This leads to more prolonged engagement by users with the centre and greater success. As a result this has had a positive impact on significantly increasing numbers registering with the centre and using its services. Over 70% of families in the reach have made use of the centre's services and 100% of new births are now registered. The centre has also had particular success in providing support to teenage parents and fathers.

The support for childminding services is also of good quality and has led to consistently good and better outcomes in their own inspections and assessments. As a result, the centre's outreach services make good use of such facilities to support families with children who are subject to a child protection plan or through the Common Assessment Framework process. The needs of all target groups are met very well by the centre. The views of a lone parent reflect those of many; 'I was at the end of my tether and would have ended up back in hospital. The centre has given me my confidence and my life back.'

The centre works well with partners across its reach area to meet its core purpose. There are particularly good links with the schools within the reach area which contribute to children's smooth transition to full-time education. Many referrals to outreach services come through these links and those with health visitors. Partnerships with employment agencies, psychological support and speech and language services also contribute to the good outcomes users achieve. Work with the Women's Institute and local charities benefit families' health and well-being in many ways. Children's lives are further enriched by

activities such as the 'Forest School', weekly fitness activities at the sport's centre and 'Buggy Fit' sessions.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**2**

The centre manager is relentless in driving forward the quality of all aspects of the work of the centre. She brings a strong knowledge and understanding of the community's needs and is well respected. She is well supported by staff and outreach workers who share a common sense of purpose. There is a good commitment to training and professional development at all levels. The steering committee, which is representative of the partners and centre community, provides a wide range of support and guidance. As a result governance and accountability arrangements are effective. Self-evaluation is good. This is evident in an ambitious operational plan. The centre has identified the need for more precise data matched closely to the reach area to ensure targets are as sharply focused as possible. The manager consults widely to ensure the centre uses its resources efficiently. This is evident, for example, in the development of the 'Dale's Babies' programme for supporting breastfeeding development in cost effective ways throughout the reach. Consequently, the centre provides good value for money.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Outreach staff make sure that families are well informed through documents in their heritage language when required. All members of staff demonstrate a good commitment to inclusion and to tackling any discrimination. Staff help to provide transport or target their resources to ensure all users have good access to the centre's provision. The promotion of a positive view of diversity is well established in childcare activities and evident in its displays.

Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and include the vetting of staff, volunteers and others who have unsupervised contact with children and vulnerable adults. All statutory requirements are met. Child protection procedures are thorough and the centre's records of criminal record bureau checks reflect good practice. Early intervention arrangements are good, exemplifying the positive partnerships with a wide range of agencies and services. All staff are well trained in aspects of safeguarding including the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and paediatric first aid.



User engagement is good. The centre consistently seeks the voice of parents and children through regular questionnaires and surveys. A good percentage of all target groups within the reach area, including disabled adults and children and those with special educational needs, engage with the centre's services thanks to the skill, enthusiasm and commitment of staff and managers.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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.</b>	<b>2</b>

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

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk). If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Wensleydale Children's Centre on 30 - 31 May 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We enjoyed speaking to you, and hearing of the difference the centre has made to you and your families. We heard how welcoming the centre is, and how all staff respond to your needs. We heard of the wide range of ways that the centre uses to help you and your family be healthy, such as outdoor play, forest school, cookery sessions, and ideas for healthy food and snacks.

You told us you feel safe when using the centre, and we judged the centre to have good procedures to keep you and your children safe and secure at all times. You told us how useful the training sessions on safety have been and how they have helped give you confidence to let your children become more independent.

It is clear that the centre staff, manager and the partner organisations are trusted and provide good support that makes a difference to many families' lives. Many of you told us how much you and your children enjoyed play sessions and music groups. These activities are of good quality and support your children's learning and development, especially in helping them be more ready for school.

There are very good links with experts that can help in a wide range of issues, and the centre has been successful in getting them involved when families need additional support or advice.

You told us that many of you, including fathers, are involved in regular activities such as the baby massage sessions and baby weighing, and attend many good courses to help you develop your skills as a parent. We heard of the outreach support many families receive if they are in a crisis, and of the consistently good standard of help and advice for families including lone and teenage parents. We heard that staff are quick to help you when you have emotional difficulties and need extra support. You also told us that attending the activities the centre runs has helped you meet new people and overcome feelings of isolation. As one parent said, reflecting the views of several of you, 'Without the children's centre my family and I would have been in trouble. They took a burden off us.'

We found that the centre staff and managers are committed to improving the work they do and welcome the ideas and feedback from people using the centre. Many of you have made good suggestions, and have let the manager, the parents' forum or the steering committee know your ideas and opinions. This is very important and your views often lead to further improvements. Several of you have also been able to give time as volunteers and learned new skills in the process. You have taken a number of training courses including English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). However, fewer of you have taken literacy or numeracy courses to further improve your employment opportunities and we have suggested the centre works towards developing this.

We judged the centre to be well led and managed and that it is in a good position to continue to build on its many strengths. However, some of the data that the centre needs to plan its improvements in not precise or local enough and we have recommended the centre improves this.

Thank you for telling us about your experiences of the centre, and may we wish you and your families every success in the future.

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