

Inspection report for Clifton Children's Centre

Local authority	York
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY439221 Little Acorns Day Nursery

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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the local authority senior manager, the centre and early learning leader, centre workers, advisory board members, parents and a range of partner agencies.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Clifton Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in 2006. A range of professional services and key partners are based on the upper floors of the building. The lower floors are used to deliver a variety of universal and targeted services to families on site, which includes a childcare provision. The centre is adjacent to Clifton Green Primary School. The centre works with partners to meet its core purpose by offering services from its base and outreach venues. Provision is also delivered in the community through a mobile 'Toy Bus'.

The majority of the population is of White British heritage, with a recent increase of Eastern European communities, particularly of Turkish and Polish heritage. Recent figures show that the population of children aged from birth to five years is high at 1,445. The centre serves a mixed socio-economic area. A small Traveller community is based in Clifton Moor. The more rural area of Skelton is considered to be a relatively prosperous area but has a small pocket of social housing. The centre base is close to the Clifton estate, which is predominantly social housing, with high levels of deprivation and 20% of families are dependent on workless benefits. In contrast, areas around Rawcliffe, Clifton Without and Clifton Moor are markedly more affluent; homes are owner occupied and unemployment is below average.

The proportion of disabled children and disabled people and those with special educational needs is low.

Children's skills on entry into childcare provision and early education is variable. Some children enter with skills and knowledge below those expected nationally for their age. The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through the nursery, childcare provision and group activities which the centre provides. Little Acorns Day Nursery is subject to separate early years inspection. It was recently inspected and the inspection report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with a shared advisory board which also serves another two centres in the north locality of York. The centre is open from 8.30am until 5pm, Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year. The centre is also open at weekends to meet community user's needs.

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

Clifton Children's Centre has developed very good working relationships with local partnerships and partner agencies. It delivers a good range of services and is well used. As a result, the lively and bustling centre is seen as a 'hub' by the community. Local charity groups help support families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. The centre is considered as somewhere anyone can be sure to receive a warm welcome and good quality advice and support. Typical comments from parents were, 'staff are really friendly and helpful' and 'they help me put things into perspective'. Provision is of high quality and particularly well targeted at the needs of those who most need help.

This highly inclusive centre values different cultures and diversity extremely well. Specific target user groups such as fathers, Gypsies and Travellers, refugee and asylum seekers are very well supported by bespoke services. Close partnership with 'York Travellers Trust' and 'Traveller and Ethnic Minority Support Services' are helping to narrow the achievement gap for users, promoting good outcomes. These parents demonstrate high levels of satisfaction.

Good leadership and management of the centre promote good or improving outcomes. Safeguarding is high priority and parents say they feel safe at the centre. A rolling programme of strategies is in place to encourage more healthy lifestyles, such as 'Healthy Food-Healthy Families'. However, lack of health data specific to the centre's reach area makes it difficult to accurately monitor impact, and this issue has been raised at a strategic level.

Children's development and achievement is well tracked and as a result, most children make good progress. Disabled children and those with special educational needs are particularly well supported by the 'Specialist Early Years Support Team'. Procedures to aid children's transition onto their next stage of learning, such as 'The Little Badgers' group, are well established and continually improving due to the good partnerships developed with some schools.

Family learning encourages positive relationships and provides good opportunities for children and parents to play, learn and have fun together. Parents are regularly involved in decision-making and their ideas are used well to shape services to meet their needs. For example, parents have developed the 'Children's Centre Group Guidelines'.

The recent re-structure of the local authority has impacted on a reduced workforce in the centre. The centre has been determined not to let this affect services and has worked hard to recruit volunteers. As a consequence, several parents have been empowered to confidently lead groups or activities. The partnership board has evolved into an advisory board which now serves a cluster of centres. However, the previously well established parent's forum has lost some of its momentum. Parental membership on the advisory board from the centre's reach area has declined dramatically and this impedes their involvement in the governance of the centre.

The centre has good capacity to improve. The centre leader and staff are passionate about making a real difference to the lives of families and firm plans are in place to progress and develop several new initiatives. They have a clear ambitious vision for the future and have accurately identified areas for improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should ensure the centre receives relevant key performance indicator data from the health authority so that the centre can more easily demonstrate the difference they are making to health outcomes.
- Strengthen the role of the advisory board by securing greater representation of parents in the governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Regular safety advice helps parents to have a better understanding of how to keep their families safe. Parents describe how much more confident they are now in dealing with choking incidents, or severe burns after a first aid course. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) process is used well to support families experiencing a range of difficulties. The impact of sensitive, tailored early intervention work such as 'Improving Access to Psychological Therapies' and the 'Independent Domestic Abuse Services' help prevent complex situations accelerating. Parents are confident to come to the centre for help because they know and trust the centre staff. Some parents described the impact of the centre's individual support as 'life changing'.

Those who choose to breastfeed are encouraged to continue to do so in the relaxed environment of the centre. The centre does not receive accurate data from the health department but instead relies on local knowledge. This suggests the number sustaining breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is low. Parents learn about the importance of a balanced diet and which foods are high in fat, sugar or salt on healthy eating courses. Some described children now eating more fruit due to attendance at the centre. Others spoke of trying 'smoothies' for the first time, which they now prepare at home. Parents told how they now read the labels on foodstuff so that they make healthier choices. City wide data on the percentage of children in the Reception Year who are obese indicate it is below the national average. Specific information pertinent to the reach area would help the centre more easily monitor health outcomes.

Parents are confident to express their views and they treat each other with the greatest of respect. Parents report that 'Baby Massage' sessions help them to bond with their babies and they have even seen health benefits, such as reduced colic. Some parents describe positive changes they had made, such as using simple instructions and the impact of using praise and star charts to encourage young children's good behaviour. Parents spoke confidently about turning the television off to play and talk to their children. As a result, parents are developing calmer, more purposeful and enjoyable relationships with their children.

Data show that the achievement gap between the lowest 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales and the rest is closing. The majority of children are making good progress in their learning. The centre is developing the additional and worthwhile help they provide for targeted children to support their readiness for school.

Good opportunities are available to parents to work as volunteers and the centre routinely seeks the views of those using the centre. However, few parents are currently on the advisory board from the centre's reach area and are therefore not fully involved in the governance process of decision making. Adults have access to a good range of learning opportunities to develop their basic knowledge and skills. Many make the gradual

progression from one course to the next and every achievement is well celebrated. Effective support has led to a few securing employment.

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	3
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	3
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's has created a nurturing environment which welcomes families. It is frequently used for supervised family contact meetings. A good range of multi-purpose rooms and high quality resources are attractively set out to invite children's use. Services offer a good balance of open access and appointment only activities. A good range of services are in place to improve children's communication, language and literacy skills, such as 'Play with Language'. The new 'Home Learning Toolkit' provides an effective pathway to encourage families to adopt healthier lifestyles and progress children's development. Some parents are already describing the 'five a day' strategies promoted, such as sharing books and rhymes with children daily.

Childminders benefit from attending the centre regularly and are involved in parent run groups, such as 'Growing Together'. Regular consultation with partners and parents ensure continuous opportunities are in place to meet families' needs. The centre identified an increase in emergency hospital visits and swiftly put plans in place to actively encourage parents to use their general practitioner and walk-in centres for minor ailments.

Through good work with local partners the centre has registered a large majority of local families, including the majority of children. Many families travel from out of the reach area to use the centre's services. Some services are taken out into the community to make access easier for families and the 'Toy Bus' is popular in enabling families to borrow good quality play resources. Consequently, the take-up of services is continually improving.

Parents and children receive good quality care, guidance and support. The breastfeeding champion and the health visitor run the weekly drop-in 'Family Health Clinic'. The centre has enhanced opportunities for parents to monitor the weight of their babies by having a

permanent weighing area. Concerns about poor dental health have led to a rolling programme of advice on oral hygiene. The 'Centre Information Champion' is constantly reviewing the effectiveness of the breadth of information provided for parents. Displays are regularly changed to ensure they are up-to-date and informative.

Children have access to good quality childcare which promotes extremely purposeful, creative and sensory exploration and active learning. The newly developed 'secret garden' provides children with exciting worthwhile outdoor experiences, such as growing vegetables and opportunities for den making.

The centre held a successful 'Aspire Event' working with a wide range of partners, such as Future Prospects, Jobcentre Plus, Family Information Services, local business and York Training College to help raise aspirations. Programmes and courses are tailored to meet targeted users' needs well and many are free of charge. Attendance and progression is well monitored.

The Citizen Advice Bureau and housing drop-in service are well used and are inclusive to senior citizens. Effective advice is given to parents, particularly on issues around unemployment, housing, benefit and debt management. The jobs vacancy board is updated weekly by Jobcentre Plus and support is in place to help adult's complete applications, which is leading to employment for some adults.

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

The centre leader has sole responsibility for the centre and her team of centre workers who are highly skilled and experienced. They have embraced changes positively. As a result, staff morale is high. Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. Day-to-day management and professional supervision systems are clear and effective. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate because the centre leader has a good understanding of areas of strength and where further improvement can be made. She tenaciously seeks information from partners to ascertain local health outcomes. There are clear links between the centre's ongoing evaluation of its services and the ambitious priorities set in their action plan.

Good partnership working has been developed with other agencies which promotes a well integrated provision, particularly for target groups. Good relationships with health colleagues promote the sharing of some localised data. Effective partnership work promotes the sharing of resources, sourcing of funding to improve provision and some joint training, helping to secure good value for money.

Good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of the centre's work. Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and security at the centre has been recently improved. Parents develop a good understanding of how to keep their children and themselves safe. The centre works well with Social Care to ensure that those subject to a child protection plan and looked after children receive the support they need. The CAF process is used effectively to target specific support for individual families. Case studies evidence sensitive multi-agency work. In addition, the 'Front Door', a new service specifically set up to provide assessment and early intervention advice, strengthens consistent decision-making.

The fairly new advisory board has appointed an independent chairperson. Members of the board confidently challenge and hold the centre to account for its work to ensure it continues to move in the right direction. The board acknowledge that it is vital that they reflect local families in the community and an active campaign is underway to recruit and engage more local parents.

Equality and diversity in relation to reflecting the community is prioritised extremely well. For example, there is a high regard for the traditions of Travellers. 'Musical Bridges' and 'Time for You' sessions effectively support parents who have a disabled child or a child with special educational needs. Crèche facilities help prevent barriers to attending training. The centre recognises the important role that fathers play in their child's development. The 'Dads and Kids' group is excellent. For example, joint partnership work has led to fathers being involved in new and exciting experiences such as an art spray paint project, where they worked alongside a renowned street artist. This resulted in finished pieces of art work being displayed in the Theatre Royal.

The thriving 'Refugee Action York' Sunday drop-in, which runs from the centre, was described as phenomenal by partners due to the positive outcomes for African, Turkish and Kurdish asylum seekers. Information is translated well to meet ethnic minorities' needs. Good opportunities are in place for families to develop English as a second language through 'English for Speakers of Other Languages' classes. This effective work with target groups helps narrow the achievement gap for users, promoting good and improving outcomes.

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

The recent Ofsted report relating to the linked childcare setting was used to make judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Clifton Children's Centre on 21 and 22 June 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Those of you we spoke to told us how much you enjoy attending the centre. You trust the centre workers and find them very helpful. We agree that the centre is a safe and welcoming place.

The centre works well with partners and local partnership agencies to ensure services meet your needs well. The centre is fully committed to helping you provide your children with the best possible start to life. Children have access to good quality childcare, activities and resources. Some of you were able to confidently explain how you are following the 'five a day' suggestions the centre encourages to promote children's learning and healthy development in your homes. The 'Little Badgers' group successfully helps targeted children ensure they are more ready for school.

Family learning provides a good range of opportunities for you to develop your parenting skills or skills for life. As a result, several of you have completed a range of courses, some of which are accredited. This progress in achievement has led to employment for some of you. We know several of you have important roles as volunteers which further strengthen the work of the centre. It was a pleasure to hear about the groups you confidently run, such as the 'Growing Together' for young children, which further help you to support your children's learning. We were impressed with the 'secret garden' some of you have helped develop. The centre is looking at ways they can further involve you more in the governance of your centre. We have asked them to increase the amount of parents on the advisory board.

You told us that you particularly enjoy 'Baby Massage' and groups such as 'Buttercups' which encourage bonding with young babies. You also enjoy the family learning courses, such as 'Healthy Food-Healthy Families'. Some of you told us that following attendance at the centre you have adopted more healthy lifestyles by increasing fruit and reducing fat, salt and sugar in your family diets. Others explained how they have learnt to encourage more positive behaviour in children by keeping instructions simple and giving children lots of praise and encouragement, for example, by using a star chart to reward good behaviour. Some of you told us you have made a role play area at home for your children like the ones you have seen in the centre, such as a sensory tent. These positive changes have had a significant impact on your family.

We have asked the local authority to improve the data the centre receives about health initiatives so that the centre can more easily see where they are making a difference and where more work needs to be done.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak to us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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