

Inspection report for Primrose Children's Centre

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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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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 additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including; health, education and children's social care professionals. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's development plans, evaluations, key policies and the centre's equality and safeguarding procedures.

Information about the centre

Primrose Children's Centre is a phase two centre situated in the Walkley area of Sheffield and was designated in August 2007. It fulfils its core purpose by offering or signposting families to a range of services and activities which include health services, family support, family play sessions, information and advice services, parenting programmes, childcare and family outreach services.

The centre delivers services across Netherthorpe, Uppertorpe, Langsett and Walkley. Of these, one area is in the 5% most deprived nationally, three areas are in the 20% most deprived and another in the 30% most deprived. Only three areas of Walkley are in the 50% least deprived areas. The centre's childcare provision is delivered by Primrose Children Centre, which is a nursery situated within the same building. This provision was visited as part of this inspection and is subject to separate inspection arrangements. The childcare was last inspected in March 2012. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

There are approximately 1153 children aged nought to five years in the reach area with 64% accessing services in the centre. Of these, 25% are considered to be living in poverty which amounts to approximately 250 children aged under five years. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding isolation, transient families, mental health, unemployment, anti-social behaviour and low levels of literacy and numeracy. There is a

diverse mix of residents and a significant minority ethnic community, many of whom speak English as an additional language and includes asylum seekers and refugees. A wide range of housing offers accommodation in the area, with high rise flats, maisonettes, apartments and social housing making up the main in the Netherthorpe, Upperthorpe, Philadelphia and Langsett areas. Walkley has mixed housing and many units are rented. As the universities are close by, a high number of overseas students live locally. Two Interim Housing facilities offer accommodation to homeless families from the whole city, with some individual units across the area. A number of properties house those seeking asylum. Levels of unemployment are high, with 22% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits and many of the existing jobs are low paid. Many children from the reach area enter early education with knowledge and skills that are slightly below expectations for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. There are links to at least six local primary schools.

Governance of the centre is provided by Sheffield Local Authority, in conjunction with a partnership advisory group (PAG) that includes providers, delivery partners and members of the local community and users that attend the centre.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

Primrose Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre. Some features and outcomes are good and many are continuing to improve steadily, particularly in relation to increasing registration and attendance rates. Leadership, management and governance arrangements are satisfactory.

Safeguarding arrangements are effective with clear information-sharing protocols, sound vetting arrangements, knowledgeable staff and robust child protection procedures. Those children subject to Common Assessment Framework (CAF) procedures and child protection plans receive good intervention and support and progress is monitored well. As a result outcomes for users are good overall.

Centre staff and health professionals effectively promote healthy lifestyles through play sessions, home visits and specific support groups. As a result, health outcomes are improving for most families in the reach areas, particularly in relation to immunisations, breastfeeding initiation and sustaining rates and mothers smoking at delivery. However, the centre is continuing to work with health partners to reduce the rate of emergency hospital admissions to children and young people.

There are many opportunities for parents and children to play and learn together. A number of parents report that the centre has had a positive impact on their parenting skills and their ability to support their children's learning and development. Good partnership working with early years' practitioners and childcare settings has secured good quality childcare provision in the reach area. Data show that despite some children's low starting points, the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores are improving well year on year and the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is narrowing steadily.

Adults accessing learning provision have shown improvement, they have learnt new skills and have had a good time in the process. Those wishing to go on to further training are signposted to the Jobcentre and other adult learning providers for specialist help and support with volunteering opportunities, improving their qualifications and employability skills. However, the centre then has little knowledge of their achievements due to the lack of tracking systems.

Experienced and skilled Early Years Family Intervention and Early Years Family Prevention workers work effectively with families, including those in target groups and those in most need of intervention and support, ensuring that provision and support meet identified needs. The centre offers good quality care, guidance and support, particularly in times of crisis. Families are appreciative of the help and support offered, reporting that 'in times of need, the centre is always there to help'. Activities are evaluated regularly and the highly active 'Friends of Primrose' parent forum enables many parents to contribute to decision-making of the centre and thereby influence the service and activities offered.

Centre staff know the key issues facing most families in the area and tailor services to meet need. However, the centre recognises the need to continue to engage with some groups that are not yet fully benefiting from its services, including lone parents and minority ethnic families. The centre maximises the services it provides by working closely with partners. However, the local authority and some partners do not provide the centre with access to timely, accurate and precise data for the reach area in order to fully measure its effectiveness. Plans for future development are based on a satisfactory analysis of need, although some individual targets lack precise detail, clear success criteria and timescales for completion which limits the centre's and partnership advisory board's ability to know when targets have been successfully achieved. As a result, leadership and management, governance of the centre and its capacity for sustained improvement are satisfactory.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes further by partnership working to:
 - develop systems to track families who are signposted to other services for volunteering, training, qualifications and employment to measure their medium- to long-term outcomes
 - reduce emergency hospital admissions to children and young people by continuing to work with partners in health.

- Continue to develop the plans to engage with those groups that the centre has already identified as not yet fully benefiting from its services, including lone parents and minority ethnic families.

- Improve leadership, management and governance arrangements further by:
 - working with the local authority and other partners to ensure that the centre has access to timely, accurate and precise data for the reach area in order to fully measure its effectiveness
 - improving analysis and detail in action plans in order to ensure that all targets for improvement have clear, measurable success criteria and identified timescales.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Strategies to increase breastfeeding rates are having a positive impact and as a result the number of mothers breastfeeding their babies beyond six weeks remains high at 81% compared to the national average of 47.1%. Similarly the percentage of mothers initiating breastfeeding is also high and steadily increasing at 89% compared to the national average of 74%. Healthy eating initiatives are helping to improve the health and well-being of families and the percentage of children in Reception Year who are obese is reducing year on year and is now in line with national rates at 9.6%.

Families report that they feel safe and secure in the centre and it is safe for them to say what they think and feel without being judged. This openness enables Early Years Family Intervention and Early Years Family Prevention workers to effectively match support to individual needs, particularly for those subject to a child protection plan, Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes and looked-after children. Robust risk assessments are in place and there are good safety arrangements throughout the building. Staff and partner agencies demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding procedures. Safety awareness discussions and baby and parenting courses all contribute to improving families' safety. However, the centre is aware that the rate of emergency hospital admissions to children and young people remains high at 13.1% and is an issue across Sheffield as a whole. They are working closely with health partners to address this and already have some clear strategies in place to improve outcomes in this area.

Good progress is being made to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores. Data show that the percentage of children achieving at least 78 points across the scales with at least six points in each of the scales for communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development have risen from 57.7% in 2010 to 70.5% in 2011. In addition, the percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest is steadily reducing from 20.7% in 2008 to 17% in 2011. Parents and children have many opportunities to play, have fun and learn together. Most parents using the centre develop their parenting skills well and report increased confidence in supporting their children's learning. As a result, learning outcomes for children and families are good.

Children behave well in activity sessions and show concern for one another. There are good opportunities for parents to express their views through regular evaluations of activities, and through discussion with staff. The centre provides good opportunities to work as a volunteer or contribute to decision-making and governance. For example, the highly active 'Friends of Primrose' group, which is run by two parent volunteers, has supported the centre to set up a community garden and a clothes swapping and food bank scheme. Parent representatives are also very active in sharing their views in the centre's sub-groups and partnership advisory group. As a result of attending the centre, parents acknowledge that their social networking skills have improved. For example, one parent stated that, 'I felt isolated but feel better now, I meet so many different people.'

Appropriate support is given to improve families' economic stability. Families have access to free independent benefits advice and help with housing issues, and the centre supports adults seeking employment and further training by signposting to the Jobcentre and other adult learning providers. There has been some success in adults accessing basic numeracy and literacy courses, thereby improving their employability skills. In addition, some individuals have achieved vocational qualifications and have gone on to secure employment. However, there is limited tracking of the outcome of the signposting to other agencies so the centre does not always have an accurate picture of the difference it is making in the longer term.

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

Needs are assessed effectively and the centre offers good quality care, guidance and support, particularly in times of crisis. The centre reacts rapidly to requests for help and support and this makes a discernible difference to those families it engages with. Assessments carried out under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) are robust and ensure effective support. Early Years Family Intervention and Early Years Family Prevention workers as well as the Children's Centre staff team, are skilled in building trusting relationships with families in order to offer appropriate support for those identified in most need. Parents report that without the help of the centre they 'dread to think how they would have coped, it's been a real lifeline'. Inspectors heard of many examples of how effective, tailored support by Early Years Family Intervention and Early Years Family Prevention workers had had a positive and lasting effect on family life.

The flexible range of services meets the needs of users well, including a rolling training programme for parents, breastfeeding cafe, regular play sessions, baby clinics, baby massage sessions and the popular 'My Dad and Me! Time to Play' group. Courses, advice and information are available either directly at the centre or through its partner agencies. All activity sessions are well planned and are responsive to families' needs. The centre also supports women in accessing groups such as 'Loose the Blues' which provides support to mothers with post-natal depression.

Staff know the community well and as a result the centre is able to target services to meet a wide range of need. The centre effectively uses alternative venues and there are good examples of outreach work, including stay and play and parenting courses being run at nearby venues which are more accessible for families. The centre evaluates the effectiveness of different venues in order to ensure accessibility and encourage greater engagement.

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?

3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There is a clear management structure with sound line management and supervision. As a result, staff are supported well. The local authority and partnership advisory group regularly monitor the work of the centre. Self-evaluation is largely accurate and there are satisfactory links between the centre's on-going

evaluation of its services and the priorities set out in its development strategy plan. However, the lack of timely, accurate and precise data for the reach area impacts on the local authority, centre manager and partnership advisory groups' ability to effectively measure its effectiveness on improving outcomes further. In addition although some priority targets for improvement are based on sound analysis others currently lack precise detail, clearly identified success criteria and defined timescales, thereby impeding the monitoring of progress over time. As a result governance and accountability arrangements and effectiveness of self-evaluation are satisfactory.

All staff are included in the process of self-evaluation and are aware of the need to increase the engagement of those groups who are not fully benefiting from the centre's services such as lone parents and those from minority ethnic groups. It is recognised however that this is sometimes hindered by the high number of transient families in the reach area, such as those in interim housing, refugees, asylum seekers and overseas students. Staff are enthusiastic in their work and are committed to making a positive difference to families' lives.

The centre focuses on activities that are sustainable, building upon existing provision and sharing costs and resources with other agencies where possible, thereby ensuring good financial management. Users report that they are very satisfied with the services provided and this, together with generally good outcomes, ensures that the centre offers good value for money.

Robust training effectively enhances staff's awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities. Their good knowledge of the safeguarding procedures means they respond swiftly and confidently to concerns. Effective procedures and protocols for sharing information are in place to ensure that needs are prioritised well. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures, including Criminal Records Bureau checks, help to ensure staff's suitability to work with children. Partnerships between staff and key agencies are strong, resulting in integrated delivery of services.

Provision is well integrated and the centre delivers services which have a positive impact on the lives of families in the area. There are strong partnerships with a range of agencies such as the Jobcentre, health services, Home-Start, Zest, Langsett Advice Centre, Sheffield Wildlife Trust and interim housing partners. These partnerships make an identifiable contribution to meeting a wide range of needs in the local area.

The inclusion of all children and their families attending is central to the work of the centre. Staff ensure that all children and adults, regardless of background, aptitudes or other differences, have access to the full range of experiences on offer. All information displayed promotes equality and diversity well, and a varied range of resources reflects the diversity of the reach area. Families with disabled children and those with special educational needs are well supported through the 'Ready, Steady, Go' group. In addition those with children who have speech and language delay benefit from the popular 'Talking Toddlers' group.

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	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	3
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 childcare provision at Primrose Children's Centre nursery was inspected in March 2012. The inspection of the children's centre was informed by the findings and judgements of this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Primrose Children's Centre on 10 - 11 September 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. Some of its features are good and many are continuing to improve.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with a range of staff, community representatives and partnership workers. We also really enjoyed talking to you around the centre and in the various activity sessions you were engaged in. We appreciated your honesty in telling us how things really are.

You told us how much you value your centre and we were pleased to hear how it has helped you and your families. We are pleased to tell you that the centre provides good support to you and your families. The centre does some things particularly well, such as the

way everybody works together to make things better for you when you need help and support and the way you are encouraged to keep safe and take up learning opportunities that are available to you.

You told us that you feel safe at the centre and are confident to say what you feel without being judged. Safety awareness information and baby and parenting courses have helped you and your children understand how to keep yourselves safe and protected. However, we have asked the centre to continue to work with health partners to reduce emergency hospital admissions to children and young people in your community. We were very pleased to see how well the centre staff work with others to provide good care and support to you when you need it most. You told us how the Early Years Family Intervention and Early Years Family Prevention workers have helped you get advice and support for many areas of your lives and how you have found their help so valuable.

We saw many opportunities for you and your children to play and learn together. We also saw how confident and independent your children are whilst they take part in the good play and learning activities on offer. A number of you told us that the centre has had a positive and lasting impact on your parenting skills and your ability to support your children's learning at home. Some of you told us how you have become more confident and how you have been encouraged to recognise and build on the skills that you already have. We were delighted to see how the centre is making a real difference to improving your lives and to hear how much more confident you feel.

The centre appropriately signposts you to the Jobcentre and adult learning specialists for help with volunteering opportunities and improving your qualifications and employability skills. We were pleased to see how some of you have had success in achieving qualifications and securing employment. However, we have asked the centre to work with these partners to find out how you are getting on.

We have asked the local authority to work with other partners to make sure the centre has precise and timely information so that the performance of the centre can be monitored more closely. There are sound plans in place to develop the centre further, although some individual targets do not have enough detail to enable the centre know when it has successfully achieved them, so we have asked the centre to improve this.

It was clear to us that the centre's staff and manager are working hard to make the centre even better. They regularly look at ways of providing interesting activities and courses that will have the most benefit. They have identified gaps in the service for some groups who are not yet fully accessing a range of services and have plans in place to improve this. The groups the centre wants to reach further include lone parents and those from minority ethnic groups.

Thank you once again for your welcome and your willingness to talk to us. We wish you every success in the future.

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