

Inspection report for Battle Hill and Hadrian Park Children's Centre

Local authority	North Tyneside
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	108595 Battle Hill Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY229938 Childcare Battle Hill EY386001 Battle Hill 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.

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors visited a range of provision across the centre. They also held meetings with senior managers from the centre, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare partners, health, education and children's social care professionals. Meetings were also held with representatives from the Working Homes Outreach Team (WHOT), Family Wise, the fire service and the Adult Learning Alliance. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Battle Hill and Hadrian Park Children's Centre is a phase one centre located in the south-west of North Tyneside. Around half of its reach area falls within the top 30% of deprived wards in the country. The reach population of the centre is just over 600. Recent figures show that over 22% of households are lone parents with dependent children. Estimated weekly income is significantly lower than the North Tyneside average and the percentage of children aged five years and under living in households dependent on workless benefits is 58%. The very large majority of local families are of White British heritage. The proportion of children attending schools in the area who are known to be eligible for free school meals is above the national average, as is the proportion of children aged under four who are living in households where no-one is working. Most children enter early years provision with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than that expected for their age. The proportion of disabled children and those with special educational needs is above average.

The centre is co-located on the site of Battle Hill Primary School and also hosts a full-time day-care provision for children from three months to school age. Due to space restrictions, service delivery is both centre and outreach based. Staff use a wide range of community venues, including nearby children's centre facilities, to host events and activities. The team and centre managers work across the west of North Tyneside, which comprises a further five centres. Governance arrangements for the centre are provided through an advisory board reporting to the local authority.

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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Battle Hill and Hadrian Park Children's Centre is highly effective in meeting the needs of local families. As a result outcomes are at least good and exemplary in significant areas. This is reflected in the comments of local people, all of whom identified the highly knowledgeable and non-judgemental staff as a key strength of the centre. 'I now have hope for the future' and 'it is the first time people have believed in me' were typical statements made throughout the inspection. Leadership, partnership working and the way partners and the centre's staff work to improve health outcomes for children and their parents successfully are notable strengths. The work of the centre in relation to supporting women experiencing low mood both pre- and post-birth is commendable, as is their contribution to the authority wide smoking cessation strategy, which this month recorded no mothers smoking at delivery.

Outstanding leadership has harnessed staff and partners' enthusiasm to reach out into the community and raise aspirations and achievements of all, particularly those families who are most disadvantaged. Multi-agency partnerships are excellent and provide the foundation stone from which to deliver individualised, integrated support which is responsive to the diverse needs of the local community. Partners and centre staff provide timely, sensitive support to families and children who are facing significant or temporary challenges in their lives. All children and parents of children who have been identified as 'in need' are extremely well supported and virtually all attend activities that are helping children to remain safely with their families. Parents report how safe and caring the centre is. However, whilst parents feel that they are able to contribute to the work of the centre through regular discussions with staff and detailed evaluations of activities, too few are fully involved in driving improvement through engagement in the governance of the centre.

Exemplary actions are taken to ensure equality of opportunity and to tackle discrimination. The role of the centre's facilitators has been central to its on-going success, particularly in relation to engaging families whose circumstances have made them hard to reach. However, whilst many parents report that their self-esteem and confidence has improved, there is a

recognised need to support even more parents back into further education and employment, as well as to refine systems so they more effectively evidence outcomes in relation to this.

Safeguarding is given a high priority and protocols between different agencies are understood and well-embedded in exemplary practice. Recruitment procedures are robust and quality assurance of all partners' procedures is rigorous. Systems for monitoring and evaluation are highly sophisticated and reflect the very high priority given to self-reflection and self-challenge. Managers have worked closely with the local authority's research and intelligence team to develop highly effective systems for data analysis which clearly reflect the impact of the excellent work undertaken. As a result services and provision can be carefully planned and targeted to achieve maximum impact. This ensures the centre has an exemplary capacity for improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Empower parents to take a more active role in the governance of the centre, ensuring they play a key part in driving future improvement.
- Continue to support families to improve their economic stability and independence by;
 - further increasing participation rates in training and/or adult learning opportunities that meet their needs and interests
 - refining data management systems to more accurately record the long term progression of families onto further education and/or employment.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Exemplary partnership working which promotes children's and families' emotional well-being and their physical health has had a significant impact on changing local attitudes to lifestyle choices. Excellent support provided by health professionals and peer support volunteers, including through groups such as 'Up Close'. This has contributed to a significant increase in the number of mothers choosing to breastfeed their babies, with 43% now continuing beyond six weeks. A well informed, integrated approach to combatting a variety of health issues within the community has ensured that a very large majority of families have developed an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves healthy. This is evidenced through the very high attendance rates at health related activities, including cooking and weaning sessions and pre- and post-natal clinics.

Children and families are extremely well safeguarded and all report that they feel safe in the centre. Families develop an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe. This is achieved through the consistent messages delivered by the family support team as well as local safety campaigns which respond to specific identified needs. An innovative partnership with the fire service has also led to a significant increase in the number of referrals for home fire safety risk assessments. This work has contributed to a 75% reduction in house fires in the locality. Exemplary multi-agency support also ensures

that looked after children, those subject to a child protection plan or Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes are extremely well supported. Appropriate information is shared between professionals, with care packages identified to meet individual need in a consistent and rigorous manner. There are currently no children in the locality on the child protection register. Case studies highlight the important contribution made by centre staff in relation to this achievement.

The enthusiasm and dedication of the early years educator and the childcare team ensures the provision of high quality education and learning experiences for all children, including disabled children and those with special educational needs. Parents and children clearly enjoy the many high quality activities offered by the centre. Staff have been empowered with the knowledge to consistently apply best practice, particularly in the development of all children's communication skills, securing accelerated progress in this key area. As a result all children make at least good progress from their starting points and start school well prepared for this next stage in their learning. An analysis of the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data for the past three years shows that the gap between the 20% lowest achieving children and the rest has narrowed at a faster rate in this reach area, than for the authority as a whole.

The centre is highly effective at raising the self-esteem and confidence of parents and as a result most families feel able to express their views and feel that they are listened to. The centre strives to empower parents to take on a more strategic role, particularly through participation on the advisory board. However, whilst many express their views and say they feel involved in decision-making, too few are fully engaged in the centre's governance and do not play a full and active role in driving improvement from this position.

Involvement in the centre has empowered many parents with the confidence to take steps back into more formal learning, training and employment. This has been facilitated through excellent partnerships with the Adult Learning Alliance and Tyne Metropolitan College. In addition, the work of the Job Centre, Family Wise and the WHOT, has been particularly effective in improving the economic stability and independence of families. The very real impact of this support is clearly evident in the increased aspirations of parents, both for themselves and their families. However, take-up rates for adult education and training are currently only good. In addition the centre's data does not always fully evidence the long term progress made by families, specifically in relation to on-going training and 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	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
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.	2

How good is the provision?

1

A wide range of services and activities are imaginatively delivered across the reach area and these reflect the very specific needs of the local community. For example, the centre offers a range of activities to support individuals who have experienced domestic violence, with life changing results. The centre promotes an holistic, integrated approach to service provision, effectively meeting a range of needs of families whose circumstances make them very vulnerable. Resulting action plans are carefully tailored to suit the individual needs of the family and case studies provide powerful examples of the positive outcomes which result. This combined with a range of targeted and universal services, all of which have a clear purpose, ensures outstanding impact across many areas of family's lives. 'I look forward to getting out of bed in the morning now', said one parent, whilst another spoke of being more confident to effectively manage the behaviour of her children.

The centre has made substantial progress in reaching out and making contact with families across the local area that it serves. The introduction of the highly comprehensive 'engagement strategy' has secured a significant increase in the number of new registrations over the past nine months, with the very large majority of families now engaging regularly with the centre. The high quality activities provided are greatly enjoyed and offer excellent learning and development opportunities for all users. The level of personal support received by families is greatly appreciated and has contributed to the genuine sense of trust in and respect for staff. Parents say that they feel empowered and comment on the real difference the centre has made to their own confidence and learning. For example, parents at a 'Food for Baby' session clearly appreciated the opportunity to discuss their different approaches to 'fussy eaters' and 'weaning'. They were able to share tips and advice on issues of concern. The celebration of achievements is also an integral part of the culture of this welcoming and inclusive centre.

Overwhelmingly parents told inspectors that that when they have most needed support and care, the response from the centre has been exceptional. 'This is the one place I know I will be safe' said one parent, whilst another told us how the centre had 'saved his family.' The advice and guidance offered is outstanding with a variety of partners visiting and working from the centre on a regular basis. Family support workers have attended training on a wide range of topics including breastfeeding, smoking cessation, safeguarding, domestic violence and parenting skills. Through this breadth of knowledge they are able to advise and sign post parents very effectively. Extremely productive relationships with relevant external agencies including portage and the speech and language team, ensure the provision of timely support and advice for families of disabled children and those with special educational needs.

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	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Inspirational leadership and strong teamwork ensures highly effective and successful integrated support and provision for most families across the area. Priorities for the centre are successfully developed with partners. They stem from a thorough audit of local need as well as consultation, and inform the centre's challenging targets for improvement. Plans developed as a result of the audit and rigorous self-evaluation processes link well to the broader priorities of the local authority and key partners. Detailed reports are provided to the advisory board with clear evidence of progress against priorities. The local authority plays an active role in overseeing the centre's performance, providing rigorous challenge through regular meetings and a formal annual conversation.

Performance management arrangements are thorough and provide a high level of challenge and opportunities for self-reflection. Supervision and appraisals take place regularly and outcomes feed into evaluations of the centre's work and the development of future priorities, including the on-going training needs of staff. As a result all staff show a great deal of initiative and high levels of commitment, resulting in excellence in all areas of the centre's work. Specifically focused stakeholder meetings further ensure that all partners and staff are aware of what is happening across the area which facilitates excellent partnership working and prevents duplication.

The centre promotes equality, tackles discrimination and celebrates diversity effectively. Staff have attended ARCH training (Agencies against Racist Crime and Harassment) and report they feel well-equipped to challenge racist comments or inappropriate behaviour. Concerted action to improve the life chances of all communities has resulted in the gap narrowing between outcomes in this area and those across the authority, particularly in relation to educational achievement and teenage pregnancy.

Safeguarding is given the utmost priority, with highly effective policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and protection of both families and staff. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out for all whom work or volunteer at the centre. Risk assessments are rigorous and the lone working policy and procedures ensures staff are safe when visiting families on their own. Families are informed of the importance of safeguarding when they start at the centre and regard this as a shared responsibility.

Partnership working stretches resources well and helps to sustain key services where additional needs are identified, particularly for disabled children and those with special educational needs. Outreach work and well-attended activities in the local communities extends the reach and impact of work of the centre successfully. Many more parents and children are using the centre as a result, particularly those in the most disadvantaged communities. The work of the centre in relation to those families at risk of their children entering the care system illustrate the excellent impact the centre has on keeping children safe in their families. The centre provides outstanding value for money, both sustaining and improving service delivery, despite significant budget reductions.

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	1
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	1

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

Battle Hill and Hadrian Park Children's Centre hosts full time day care provision for children aged birth to school age. Three local primary schools, Battle Hill, Hadrian Park and St Bernadette's Roman Catholic, with Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children over three years, are also part of the centre's remit. Information from their most recent Ofsted inspections has been taken into account when writing about early years provision and outcomes for children in this report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Battle Hill and Hadrian Park Children's Centre on the 19 to 20 September 2012. We visited activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with you and professionals. Following this work, we have judged the centre as outstanding.

The centre provides a wealth of excellent activities aimed at helping families improve their lives. Your views strongly support this as you tell us that you are happy with the activities you attend and services you use because they have helped you in lots of different ways. For example, some of you have received excellent support to continue breastfeeding and to learn more about healthy eating, whilst others have found the opportunities to undertake parenting courses such as '3 Ps' to be 'supportive' and 'a life-line.' The reduction in the number of mothers smoking at delivery is impressive as has been the increase in the numbers choosing to continue breastfeeding for more than six weeks. Many of you have also taken advantage of the numerous training and volunteering opportunities available and we know that this has given you the confidence to enrol on further college courses or to go back to work. We have asked the centre to encourage even more of you to enrol on further education courses and to ensure that they are able to monitor your progress in relation to this.

Most importantly, you told us that you feel safe at the centre and can trust the staff particularly when you most need it. You said that you appreciate the advice and help of the family support workers and have welcomed home visits and the opportunity to go with someone to a group until you build your confidence and make new friends. We found that the centre was doing an excellent job of helping you at times in your life when you most need it. We found that action was taken quickly and that different people and organisations worked exceptionally well as a team to support both children and families.

The centre is working extremely well with other partners such as health visitors, speech and language therapists and social care teams. You told us that it is good to go to the many support groups and clinics and welcome the opportunity to talk to the health visitor or the family support worker in a relaxed, informal environment. A lot of parents, especially those who are bringing up children on their own, told us that they felt really happy on the days when they have an activity to go to and have valued the friendships made.

We found that those people leading the centre are doing an outstanding job. Managers, together with partners and other staff have worked very effectively to make sure that everything the centre does for you will make a real, genuine and lasting difference to the area in which you live. We know that everyone who works with Battle Hill Children's Centre shares this view. The centre has access to lots of detailed information to help them plan future activities and we know they listen to you because you enjoy attending activities they provide.

The centre has spent a lot of time ensuring that you are involved in making decisions about its direction and the different services it provides. We know that you feel genuinely respected and listened to as a result. However, the centre involves too few of you in its governance and so opportunities are missed for you to help to drive on-going improvements. We have recommended that the centre find ways for more of you to become involved in this in the future.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us, we are very grateful and we wish you very good luck for the future.

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