

# Inspection report for Armthorpe Village Children's Centre

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Local authority	Doncaster
Inspection number	407157
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Centre leader	Alison Tomes
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not Applicable
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.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the advisory board and the local authority. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Armthorpe Village Children's Centre is a phase two centre which was designated in 2008 and is situated in a purpose built building on the site of Shaw Wood Primary School in Doncaster. Armthorpe is a large village that once had a thriving mining community. The village has expanded over the years and is now a substantial residential area. Families using the centre are mainly of White British heritage with a recent increase of Eastern European families, particularly of Polish heritage. Two Traveller sites are situated at either side of the village.

Recent figures show that there are 964 children under five years of age living in the reach area. Data from the centre in 2011 show that the proportion of children under five years living in workless households is decreasing but at approximately 20.3% remains higher than the national average. The average household income is similar to the Doncaster average although the number of children living in poverty is significantly better than the Doncaster average. Data from 2008 to 2009 shows 20.9% of families were in receipt of working tax credit. The main social issues affecting the village include poor dental hygiene, low rates of breastfeeding and significant rates of domestic violence and substance and alcohol misuse.

Family support, child development advice and antenatal clinics are offered at the centre. Health partners are based locally at the White House Farm Surgery where they provide drop

in services and local midwives are based within the centre. The area social work team is based at The Vermuyden Centre in Thorne.

The majority of groups and activities are delivered in the centre but others are delivered at sites across the community. The centre has no Early Years Foundation Stage childcare provision onsite but works closely with Shaw Wood Academy and has affiliation with Armthorpe Daycare Nursery. The inspection report on that provision is available from our website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)). There are links with local primary schools and childminders. The number of children entering early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age is decreasing.

Governance of the centre changed on 1 April 2012 from Shaw Wood Primary School to the local authority. There is an advisory board with representation from parents and a range of professionals, centre staff, local headteachers, and representatives from health and local authority advisory staff.

## 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

'Before coming here I had no confidence or self-esteem. I used to say, "I can't do that." But now I say, "I will accomplish what I want!"' is how one parent described the impact of Armthorpe Village Children's Centre on her life. This outstanding centre has built up the trust of the community, is highly valued by local families and delivers outstanding outcomes, including for those most in need.

The centre knows its reach area very well and is very busy and well-attended. Under the governance of Shaw Wood Primary School, and with the support of a very well established advisory board, the centre manager has developed a clear, shared vision with well-articulated aims, objectives and priorities.

Staff promote an atmosphere of tolerance, understanding and respect for all families. They share a positive 'can-do' attitude and high aspirations for all centre users which helps remove barriers and motivates children and adults to make exceptional personal and educational progress. Multi-agency partnerships are outstanding and enable the centre to deliver highly effective targeted support to the diverse needs of the local community often at a very early stage.

The centre has registered 86% of families from the reach area and, of these, 94% show sustained engagement with services. Over the last year the number of parents registered and engaged with services at the centre has increased by 21%. Early years integrated provision is very successfully targeted at narrowing the achievement gap and is leading to outstanding outcomes. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile data for 2012 shows that the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest has narrowed significantly from 30.1% to 24.4%. An increasing number of children now enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities in line with those expected for their age.

The majority of centre users are involved in learning activities that significantly raise confidence and self-esteem, leading to further training and building employability skills. Strong partnerships with health agencies are significantly improving outcomes for health. However, there is still more to do to improve rates of breastfeeding and dental decay.

The centre manager has been in post for four years, providing consistent and exemplary leadership and management. Staff work exceptionally well as a team, are confident, highly skilled and well-motivated. The centre listens to parents and takes action on what they say. Parents contribute very significantly to the day-to-day life of the centre, and its strategic direction, through the 'Parents' Voice' and the advisory board.

The centre's priorities link very clearly to rigorous monitoring and evaluation of services. The local authority has recently introduced a new data system with the capacity to enable the centre to analyse its impact on outcomes more precisely. However, this is not yet used to regularly report on the centre's impact to staff, partners and centre users.

The recent change of governance and accountability from Shaw Wood Primary School to the local authority has been managed extremely well with no detriment to service. Together with the outstanding outcomes, this shows excellent leadership and management and exemplary capacity for sustained improvement.

Safeguarding is given utmost priority. Families are very well safeguarded and feel very safe in the centre. Highly effective, robust policies and procedures and protocols are consistently well-implemented. Staff are very well supported, adept at identifying concerns and refer quickly and appropriately when necessary.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Work with partners to further improve health outcomes by continually raising the percentage of mothers sustaining breastfeeding and reducing the incidence of dental decay.
- Embed rigorous systems for the analysis and evaluation of data, received from partners and from within the centre, to refine monitoring and evaluation of the centre's impact on outcomes and provide regular, easily understandable reports to staff, partners and centre users.

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

<b>1</b>
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Safety is given utmost priority within the centre and parents show a thorough understanding of safeguarding. Children routinely use cycle helmets in the outdoor provision and learn about risks when they visit the Forest School. The centre works very well with other agencies to support children in need, looked after children and those subject to a child protection plan. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is exceptionally well used to ensure the sharing of information, rigorous assessment and swift referral. There are significant and sustained improvements in outcomes for most children on a child protection plan, with exceptionally good outcomes for some families who are assessed as having very low starting points.

Children within the Early Years Foundation Stage achieve very well because provision in the area is generally of high quality. The early years consultant teacher provides excellent support. Childminders benefit hugely from the centre's drop in group and the early years training. A variety of excellent programmes, notably the 'Stepping Stones' transition group, significantly improve children's communication, language and literacy, enabling exemplary progress in personal, social and emotional development. Local schools comment on the centre's excellent impact on improving children's readiness for school. For example, when children begin at school they are confident, separate from their parents easily, and parents actively support children's learning at home. This allows children from often very low starting points and very poor speech and language to make very good starts in nursery school. The number of children achieving at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage with at least six points scored in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development is high at 66.5%.

The majority of centre users, at 53%, are improving their skills, knowledge and confidence through high quality learning activities, including parenting courses, personal development programmes, counselling, and accredited and non-accredited courses, including literacy and

numeracy. Their progress is exceptionally well supported and monitored leading to excellent completion and achievement rates. The centre can demonstrate its success in the numbers of parents gaining qualifications that lead to further training and employment opportunities.

A very wide range of activities and services successfully promote physical, emotional and mental health and good relationships at the centre. Ante-natal services, birth workshops, baby clinics, child development support and advice about feeding and weaning contribute to increasingly good health outcomes. Obesity figures for children in Reception Year are in line with and slightly above the national average; however, the centre is not complacent and maintains healthy eating and healthy lifestyles as a high priority. Armthorpe has low rates for infant mortality and unintentional and deliberate injury to under five year olds. The centre and its health partners are currently scrutinising reasons for a higher than average rate of attendance at accident and emergency for children under five years. The number of mothers sustaining breastfeeding is steadily rising and levels of dental decay in children under five years are reducing, however, both figures are still below the national average.

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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</b>

## How good is the provision?

<b>1</b>
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The centre provides an exceptionally warm, welcoming and safe environment for all families. Provision, including the excellent outdoor area, is extremely well-resourced and exceptionally well maintained.

The centre knows its most vulnerable groups and monitors their progress very well. Staff are highly confident and skilled. They take great pride in their work, planning and preparing meticulously and evaluating outcomes carefully. Services, activities and opportunities are consistently of very high quality and carefully matched to assessed needs. Staff are very

successful in reaching out to support families most in need. They focus on the whole family and work very sensitively and purposefully to engage parents and children. They successfully identify starting points, review progress and support the next steps. Achievement of both parents and children are well-celebrated. Parents describe the staff as 'fantastic'. One parent said, 'I would not be here today as a volunteer without the help I have had from the staff here. They are wonderful and always there for you.'

Staff work exceptionally well with partner agencies to assess needs and to remove barriers for both adults and children. They provide excellent support for families in crisis as well as those with assessed needs. There is outstanding support for speech and language in both universal and targeted groups, such as the phonics group. The transition group provides exemplary support for children who have been identified by health visitors as needing additional help before they go to nursery. The programme successfully involves parents in their child's learning at home and enables children from very low starting points, often with very little speech, to make outstanding progress, exceed expectations and significantly improve transitions to nursery.

Armthorpe has an increasing number of children under the age of five with special educational needs. The centre works very well with others to support families and increase provision, including a holiday play scheme, a support group for parents of children with autism and a group for parents waiting for diagnosis of their child's needs. The centre is successfully engaging fathers at the centre, strengthening the bonds between fathers and their children.

The centre provides high quality information, support and guidance covering a wide range of issues. A computer in the reception area is used by parents to access information, including for employment and training. Home visits from family support workers and the parent engagement worker are hugely successful in engaging and supporting harder to reach families. The Job Centre provides regular up-to-date information to support the recently established 'Work Club'.

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



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

The centre manager is very well qualified, determined and ambitious for the centre. She is very ably supported by Shaw Wood Primary School, the local authority and the advisory board. She provides an excellent role model for her staff. All staff and advisory board members clearly adopt the centre's shared vision 'to encourage, empower and enable children and families to achieve their full potential by igniting the belief that they can change in a positive way'.

Staff are exceptionally well managed, work very well as a team and make the very best use of each other's skills and knowledge. They benefit from high quality training and robust supervision arrangements. A rigorous cycle of monitoring and quarterly evaluation captures the views and experiences of parents, staff, partners and children and informs the continuous improvement cycle. This has recently been enhanced further through the provision of a new system for data analysis. The centre is now able to analyse data from all partner agencies more robustly to measure its impact on all service users. However, this is still in its early stages. The centre's development plan has clear measurable targets which make a strong contribution to the health, safety and welfare of children and families, including those who are most in need.

Parents contribute significantly to the centre's priorities and strategic direction and are very well represented on the advisory board. The board is very well established and has provided important continuity during the recent changes in governance. Four focus groups, consisting of key partners and parents, feed into the board promoting involvement and understanding and enabling it to provide effective support and challenge.

Rigorous evaluation and financial management systems ensure accountability and demonstrate the centre's outstanding value for money. The centre takes effective action to tackle weaknesses and ensures resources are well-targeted towards those most in need. Excellent use is made of volunteers and social work students to enrich and extend provision and enable re-allocation of resources to additional identified areas.

Users and staff reflect the local community and staff promote a culture of respect for all. The centre implements clear policies to promote equality and respect for diversity and to tackle discrimination. It is proactive in engaging specialist support, for example to develop an after school club for Polish families moving into the area. The centre makes very good use of funding sources such as the 'Childcare Support Scheme' to help families whose circumstances make them vulnerable.

Partnerships with a range of agencies including local schools, health services, adult education, and social services are exemplary. Staff provide outstanding support for those experiencing domestic violence. Safeguarding has the utmost priority. Robust systems ensure all adults working through the centre have had Criminal Records Bureau and necessary checks. Risk assessments are excellent and ensure families are exceptionally well protected within the centre. Exemplary protocols and procedures for referrals and for sharing of information between agencies contribute to robust safeguarding assessments across agencies. Staff work exceptionally well with partners to support children in need and ensure those subject to a child protection plan secure swift referral, early intervention and positive outcomes.

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>1</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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>1</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 Armthorpe Village Children's Centre on 26 and 27 September 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall. We visited activities, looked at documents and talked with a number of children, and adults including parents, staff, local authority representatives, volunteers and partnership workers.

We were pleased to meet with some of you and to listen to your views. You made your views clear and we have used them to make our judgement.

Thank you for welcoming us to the centre and spending time with us. We found that the centre provides excellent care, guidance and support and a very warm, friendly welcome for all families in the community. Parents confirmed to inspectors how much they valued the centre and praised its staff.

Parents and children develop good awareness of healthier lifestyles through activities such as baby massage, cooking classes, the 'Foodie Gang' and the 'Allotment Group'. The provision of ante-natal services and baby clinics at the centre helps parents understand about feeding and weaning. The numbers of mothers sustaining breastfeeding is increasing, although this still remains low. Similarly, although dental decay in children under five years is improving, figures remain low. The centre is well aware of these issues. We have asked them to improve rates of breastfeeding and reduce the incidence of dental decay in children under five years.

The centre provides an excellent range of well planned activities and opportunities for children that help families have fun and learn together. Children make excellent progress because early years provision in the area is good. Parents and children form friendships through fun activities such as 'Busy Feet', 'Musical Minis' and 'Big Friends, Little Friends' and the 'Phonics Group'. In particular, the centre is doing excellent work to help children who have been identified by health visitors as needing additional help before they go to nursery. The 'Stepping Stones' group is having exceptionally good results in helping children improve speaking, listening and reading skills and to be ready for nursery. Fathers are successfully

getting involved with their children at the centre through the Dads' group and other activities.

The centre is secure and exceptionally well-resourced and well-maintained. Parents told us they feel very welcomed and safe and can trust the staff to help when they most need it. The sensitive advice and support from the family support workers are highly valued. Families at risk of harm and abuse are given very good help and professional support, including those experiencing domestic abuse.

Those in charge of the centre are doing a very good job in improving outcomes for adults and children. Leadership and management of the centre are excellent. Vision and ambition are focused on supporting the children and adults in Armthorpe to realise their full potential. There are clear priorities and targeted action plans which are regularly reviewed to ensure excellent value for money.

A major strength of the centre is the support from Shaw Wood Primary School, the local authority and the advisory board. We were particularly impressed with the strong contributions by parents to the advisory board. Parents also contribute their views through evaluations, the comment box and the parents' voice forum. We hope you continue to contribute your feedback as it is very important in guiding the direction of the centre and ensuring it meets the needs of families.

Staff are highly motivated and very well trained. As a result, they give very skilled and sensitive support that helps children and parents reach their potential. The centre works exceptionally well with other partners such as health visitors and speech and language therapists. Children and adults who speak English as an additional language are given the extra support they need through the 'Little English Speakers After School Group'.

There is very good support for disabled children and those with special educational needs and staff work exceptionally well so that children and families get the support they need at the earliest possible opportunity. The centre has been very successful in engaging the large majority of families in the reach area and the majority are involved in learning activities. This is enabling parents to develop self-confidence and self-esteem and gain further qualifications that can lead to further training and on to employment. Some have gone on to volunteer at the centre and join the advisory board.

The centre and the local authority collect data and use this effectively to plan the services offered. Recently, the local authority enhanced its procedures for data analysis. We have asked the centre to use this new system to improve the way it monitors outcomes for families and to keep partners, staff and centre users regularly informed of the centre's performance.

Thank you to all the families that we met for your input into the inspection. It really was appreciated. We wish you every success and hope that you, your children and many more parents who live locally will enjoy and benefit from the services available to you in the future.

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