

Inspection report for Hemlington Children's Centre

Local authority	Middlesbrough
Inspection number	404490
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Viewley Hill Primary School URN 111666
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Rosedene, Hemlington EY333729 Hemlington Children's Centre EY335079

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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 centre lead and the cluster manager, staff members, members of the advisory board, partner representatives, parents, volunteers and local authority officers linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hemlington Children's Centre is a phase one centre, designated in March 2006. The centre is one of three centres that make up the recently established South-West locality. There is a cluster manager who oversees the three centres and a children centre lead who manages the individual centre. Governance is provided by the local authority and there is an advisory board and 'parent network' group in place.

The centre covers the wards of Hemlington, Stainton and Thornton and parts of Coulby Newham, and serves an area that is both unique and diverse in its socio-economic make up. Housing ranges from executive type homes to rented accommodation and social housing. The majority of the community live in rented accommodation. Hemlington ward is in the top 20% wards of deprivation and is number 341 out of 7,932 on the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation. The Coulby Newham ward has pockets of families living in areas that fall within a 30% super output of disadvantage. As a result of the expansion of the reach area in September 2012 the numbers of children aged under the age of five years has increased to 955. The population of the area is predominately of White British heritage with a small percentage of families being from minority ethnic groups.

The area as a whole has higher than national rates of unemployment and a high number of families are in receipt of key benefits. The area is identified as suffering from antisocial behaviour particularly in relation to young adults and older children and vehicle crime is said to be high.

The centre shares its location with Viewley Hill Primary School, a privately run childcare provision, Rosedene, and the centre's own registered crèche. These are subject to separate inspections and the reports can be found at: www.ofsted.gov.uk

Children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities which are often lower than those expected for their age, particularly in communication and language, and personal, social and emotional development.

The centre is participating in the distribution of vouchers to parents to enable them to take part in any one of seven offers of development and training. This is part of the local authority's involvement as one of three areas piloting the national government's parenting voucher scheme.

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

This is a welcoming and inclusive children's centre that provides effective and improving outcomes for children and families.

Services and activities provided by the enthusiastic, skilful and well qualified staff are based on secure evaluation, planning and assessment, which clearly have the needs and desires of the centre's users at heart. The centre promotes many and varied activities to promote both adult and children's learning and development and all users are encouraged to have high aspirations. All activities are well planned and those which include young children are securely based on the Early Years Foundation Stage. However, the tracking in both the short and longer term of learning and development is less well developed to fully show the centre's impact on individual achievement and improvement to economic well-being.

The centre has an excellent approach to safeguarding. The centre's clearly documented procedures that include their approach to child protection, staff safety and risk assessments are thoroughly known and implemented by staff at all levels. The centre's use of universal, tailored and targeted intervention together with robust partnership working ensures that

families, particularly those who are in difficult circumstances, which make them potentially vulnerable, are provided with cohesive and accessible services to meet their needs.

A significant strength of this centre is the managers' and staffs' commitment and energy in providing an outstanding quality of care, guidance and support. There is clear and compelling evidence to show how the centre takes every opportunity to provide the best guidance, care and support to the users of the centre either by themselves, their partners or by signposting to other services. Parents' comments overwhelmingly show how the centre has significantly helped them in times of difficulty, including where users have had mental health needs, child protection or domestic violence problems. Parents' comments include, 'This centre is my lifeline and has been priceless to me.'

Leadership and management are strong and managers at all levels competently and confidently supervise the work of the centre. They are successfully implementing the changes that the recent restructuring of children's centre delivery throughout the local authority has brought. All staff work diligently to ensure services continue to successfully meet the needs of the reach area in these times of financial constraints and managers are mindful of the need to constantly monitor the impact of these on staffing levels, availability and capacity. Self-evaluation is used effectively to determine the areas for development in the centre's delivery improvement plan. However, although the plan identifies success criteria it lacks clearly defined targets and measures by which to clearly measure success.

Overall, the good leadership and dedicated staff, along with the clear impact that the centre is having on children and families, indicate that the centre's capacity to improve is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop further the tracking of children's and adults' individual development to better show the impact of the centre's work on improving outcomes for children and families in both the short and longer term.
- Refine the centre's delivery improvement plan to better show the targets and measures required to reach the desired outcomes.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre ensures that the promotion of healthy lifestyles is threaded throughout all activities provided, including universal, tailored and targeted services. It works very closely with health colleagues and others to identify those who need particular support in this area. Activities, such as 'Food4Health', have been developed from a universal programme but now focus on referred families with an identified need. Parents highlight how, at these sessions, they are learning to make cheap but nourishing meals that are low in fat, salt and sugar.

They appreciate having meals to take home and state that they are using what they learn in the centre at home with their children. Comments made to inspectors from fathers who have attended the 'Men's Health Project' support positive outcomes for health. They include, 'I'm a lot fitter.', 'I'm more motivated to get out of the house.' and 'I encourage my kids to exercise more.'

The centre has a strong focus on promoting safety for children and families, and staff can and do obtain safety equipment for parents where a need is identified. Staff are committed to promoting safety and constantly demonstrate good practice in all activities and sessions. The centre is said by families to be a safe place to be; this is supported by parental comments and feedback such as, 'I know my son is safe here – important as he has no sense of danger.' Parents who have attended first-aid training in the centre spoke very positively of its impact on their ability to deal with accidents and gave graphic examples of how they had put the skills they had learnt into practice. There are clear examples from parents and case studies to show how the centre's input has helped children to come off, and stay off, child-protection plans.

During the inspection, parents and children were seen to be thoroughly enjoying the activities and training on offer. Attendance at sessions is high and includes families from across the spectrum of the reach area. The average attendance of 25 to 30 children at, for example, 'Baby Explorers' is testimony to the value that is placed on activities by parents and is reflected in comments such as, 'My child and I really enjoy coming here.' and 'It really helps with my child's development.' Across the reach area children's progress at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage is good. Data show the profile scores for children achieving 78+ points including six points in communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development has risen from 34% in 2009/10 to 56.4% in 2011/12. There is good provision made for parents to improve their learning and development. Parents highlight how attendance at such diverse activities and courses help with parenting skills. For example, the weaning course 'Don't rush to mush', training specific to drug awareness, and family numeracy and literacy courses have increased their self-esteem, promoted a belief in themselves and are driving them to provide better lives for their children and families.

Children's behaviour throughout the centre is good. Parents and children express their views through regular evaluations and in the recently introduced session parent comment books and floor books that are available for contributions from both children and parents in sessions. There are parents on the advisory board and an active 'Parents Network' is in place. Parents spoken to are very confident that they are listened to and have an ownership of the centre.

The centre works with adult learning and Jobcentre services, particularly the lone parent advisor, to promote economic stability. As a result of this work and the clearly identified 'Pathway to training, further education and employment' there has, for example, in the last three months been eight referrals to local 'job clubs' for specific help and guidance and three women have started university. Volunteers are actively encouraged and are provided with comprehensive training. There are currently 11 parents from this centre involved with

volunteering. Crèches are provided to help parents to access training and parents confirmed that this good service enables them to pursue their learning in a positive way knowing their children are well looked after.

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.	2

How good is the provision?

2

The centre uses assessment well to identify individual and reach area needs. Staff are astute at gathering information from and about users which effectively contributes to a strongly implemented Common Assessment Framework process which enables staff to use the 'pathway to care and education' well. 'Team around the family' meetings are also used well to meet individual needs. These approaches significantly contribute to the provision by staff of outstandingly tailored care, guidance and support, particularly in times of crisis. There is a wealth of useful and informative information displayed around the centre.

The blend of universal and activities for which an invitation is required ensures that the range of services meets the needs of users well. Activities and services range from 'Confidence Building', 'Stay and Play' and the family Links Nurturing programme to those provided in partnership with health such as 'Baby and Child Health Drop-in'. Centre staff and their partners work very hard to extend the services available. Recent innovations include the introduction of the 'Early Bird Session' for women prior to their booking an appointment in the ante-natal period and the Bookstart new initiative, 'story corner', which is targeted at children who are currently not engaging with services. Achievement is thoroughly celebrated within the centre and every success is acknowledged by such things as the presentation of certificates and reports in local press and publications. Centre staff have high aspirations for all who use their services.

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
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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.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels and both staff and managers are working cooperatively to successfully manage the impact of the recent changes to the model of children's centre delivery. Staff report that morale is high and that the amended staff team are working well together. The centre focuses its work on sustainable universal, tailored and targeted services. There is a strong commitment to sharing resources, with much sharing seen between the centre, local schools, health and the linked nursery. This, along with good and improving outcomes for children and families, ensure the centre provides good value for money.

Centre managers and staff have a clear vision for the centre and an absolute determination to improve the outcomes for children and families in their reach area. Management is held to account by the local authority's annual conversation and by the challenge and support shown to be in place from the advisory board. All staff are very clear about the management structure and have regular supervision, case monitoring and appraisals. Overall, data are used well and have significantly improved since the availability of specific health data some 18 months ago. Where there is some identification by the local authority and centre staff of where data are less helpful, work is on-going to improve it. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate although sometimes a little underrated and there is a good understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development. Development plans are in place which reflect the identified areas for development and clearly link to self-evaluation and strategic plans. However, they sometimes lack specific targets and measures to ensure that their impact can be fully determined.

Robust safeguarding procedures, including the completion of Criminal Record Bureau checks, training and detailed staff knowledge, are in place to securely contribute to the safeguarding of children and families. Where concerns are identified, swift action is taken. The very clear procedures and processes in place to ensure that information is shared appropriately are effectively implemented. Case records for those children on, for example, child-protection plans are meticulously completed. The centre is currently working with 75 open tailored or targeted cases of which 12 are 'Children in need' and 10 are 'child protection'. The centre has a variety of partnerships in place which successfully contribute to improving children's and families lives. For example, partnerships with 'Harbour' support those experiencing domestic violence and the exceptional partnerships with the linked private day care intrinsically support targeted children who are participating in 'Early Education for twos'. Partnerships with local schools are described by headteachers as exemplary and invaluable as a foundation for children's transition into nursery and school.

Headteachers highlight how parents who have experienced the centre are much more willing and able to enter into engagement with school staff to contribute to their child's life in a school setting.

Equality and diversity is at the heart of all the centre does. The centre actively works to ensure all who engage in the work of the centre feels and is valued. It strives and does ensure children and parents with particular needs, including those with disabilities, are fully included. The centre works well with young parents, and a group specifically for them is well attended. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Profile scores is decreasing and in 2011/12 is 32.22% compared to 39.19% in 2010/11. Registrations and engagement with the centre are increasing. Of the 874 children aged under five years identified in the area in 2011/12, 756 are registered and 622 are engaged in activities that are funded by the centre. User satisfaction is high with the very large majority of those who responded to the most recent customer satisfaction survey judging the centre as being excellent. The centre is described to inspectors by parents and partners alike as a focal point in the community and an essential resource to improving outcomes for families.

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	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.	2

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

The findings from a random selection of the most recent inspections of local childminders, childcare provision and schools have contributed to the centre report and judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Hemlington Children's Centre on 27 and 28 September 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Your centre is welcoming and inclusive to all who use its services. It provides effective and improving outcomes for you and your children.

Services and activities provided by the enthusiastic, skilful and well qualified staff are based on a secure understanding of your needs and what you want. The centre promotes many and varied activities to promote both you and your children's learning and development and all of you are encouraged to have high aspirations. All activities are well planned and those which include young children are securely based on the Early Years Foundation Stage, which helps children be better prepared to go to nursery and school. However, centre staff do not always track what you have learnt as well as they could to show how much you have achieved with their help in improving your and your child's learning, the qualifications you have achieved and how this is improving your lives. We have asked the centre to improve this.

The centre has an excellent approach to safeguarding. The centre's clearly documented procedures, that include their approach to child protection, staff safety and risk assessments are thoroughly known and put into practice by staff at all levels and are well known to you. The centre's use of universal, tailored and targeted intervention, together with very strong partnership working ensures that families, particularly those of you who are in difficult circumstances which may make you potentially vulnerable, are provided with good and accessible services to meet your needs.

A significant strength of this centre is the managers' and staffs' commitment and energy in providing outstanding quality of care, guidance and support. There is very clear evidence to show how the centre takes every opportunity to provide the best guidance, care and support to you who use the centre either by themselves, their partners or by signposting to other services. Your comments overwhelmingly show how the centre has significantly helped you in times of difficulty, including where some of you who may have had mental health

needs, child-protection or domestic-violence problems. Your comments include, 'This centre is my lifeline and has been priceless to me.' It is clear the centre is a focal point in the community and is essential to improving family lives.

Leadership and management are strong and managers at all levels are very good at supervising the work of the centre. They are successfully putting into place the changes that the recent restructuring of children's centre delivery throughout the local authority has brought. All staff work hard to ensure services continue to successfully meet your needs and the needs of those in the wider reach area, particularly in these times of financial constraints. Self-evaluation, to which you told us you contribute to, is used effectively to determine the areas for improvement in the centre's delivery-improvement plan. However, although the plan identifies success criteria it lacks clearly defined targets and measures by which to measure success. We have asked the centre staff to make sure these are there.

We thoroughly enjoyed our time at your centre and believe it will continue to go from strength to strength. We hope that you will continue to benefit from its services and activities and that you will tell all of your friends and neighbours about the good work that it does and encourage those you know, particularly with young children, who do not attend to come along and benefit too.

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