

Inspection report for Thorpe Hesley Children's Centre

Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	383844
Inspection dates	17–18 October 2012
Reporting inspector	Sue Pepper HMI

Centre leader	Sue Kaskiewicz
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Thorpe Hesley Infant School 106923
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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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 head of centre and the senior leadership team, the family support and outreach workers, and lead teachers. They met with parents, childminders, school governors and members of the advisory board. They also held meetings with representatives from the local authority and a range of partners. They observed the centre's work and the services running at the time of the inspection. They also looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's business and action plans, data, evaluations and key policies.

Information about the centre

Thorpe Hesley Children's Centre is a phase three centre which was designated in 2008 and became operational in April 2009. The purpose-built centre is linked to Thorpe Hesley Infant School, forming the main entrance into the school. The centre works with partners to meet its core purpose by offering services from its base or signposting them to other local venues.

The population in the Thorpe Hesley area is mostly of White British heritage but a few families are from minority ethnic groups. There are approximately 261 children under five years of age living in the centre reach area. Statistical data for Thorpe Hesley indicate that the reach area is more affluent than other areas in Rotherham. Few families with young children are dependent on workless benefits. A large majority of adults leave school with qualifications or skills to enable them to enter the workforce. The number of teenage parents is very low. The proportion of disabled children and disabled people and those with special educational needs is low. The majority of children enter early years provision with skills and knowledge generally expected nationally for their age. The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through the school, group activities which the centre provides and private and voluntary organisations in the local area.

Governance of the centre is provided for the local authority by Thorpe Hesley Infant School Governing Body and an advisory board. The centre is open during term time only, 40 weeks of the year.

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

Good leadership and management of the centre ensure good quality provision. As a result, outcomes for children and families are mostly good.

Purposeful learning and development are promoted extremely well. Passion for promoting high standards in the early years is evident. High aspirations for all ensure children's individual needs are very well met. Consequently, all children enjoy learning and they are extremely well prepared for school. Improvements in personal and social development and the educational achievement of children and families using the centre are outstanding. Parents demonstrated high levels of satisfaction and typically described the centre as simply 'brilliant' or 'fantastic'.

Despite significant financial cuts last year the senior leadership team tenaciously continue to provide high-quality services to meet the needs of children and their families. They maintain a clear focus on continually working to improve children's and parents' life chances. Leaders have adjusted well to sharing staff with another local children's centre, which has further enhanced their good partnership working. Continued good progress despite adversity demonstrates the centre's good capacity to improve.

The centre is well established and a large majority of families are accessing services. Data that the local authority provides are continually improving and help the centre to analyse the attendance of specific groups successfully. The local authority sets the centre challenging and ambitious targets which the centre responds well to.

Attention to safeguarding children and their families is of high priority. All users of the centre said they feel safe. A good range of non-accredited adult learning attracts much

interest and successfully raises adults' self-esteem, confidence and skills. There are good opportunities to progress onto accredited learning and several parents follow career progression routes which lead to employment, particularly in childcare.

Health outcomes overall are satisfactory. Generally good strategies are in place to encourage families to adopt healthy lifestyles. The percentage of children in the Reception Year who are obese is below the national average. Although breastfeeding is well promoted, success is variable. Some mothers choose to breastfeed but only a small minority manage to sustain this. A 'No Smoking' drive is firmly in place but it has yet to have an impact because the percentage of mothers smoking during pregnancy is above the national average.

The school has a well-established 'caught you' ethos which promotes children's positive behaviour extremely well. Staff regularly acknowledge children's good behaviour, which has a very positive effect. Specific adult training programmes further encourage the successful development of positive behaviour management of children and help promote good relationships.

Well established strategies are used to increase parents' opportunities to share their ideas, opinions and expectations of services. A few parents work as volunteers at the centre and this has led to further education or employment for some, but opportunities are limited. While some parents are members of the advisory board and are actively involved in decision making at a strategic level, these are relatively few in number.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve health outcomes by working with health partners to:
 - increase the percentage of mothers initiating and sustaining breastfeeding
 - reduce the percentage of mothers who smoke during pregnancy.

- Increase parents' involvement further by:
 - enhancing opportunities to contribute to the governance of the centre
 - building on the opportunities created to work as a volunteer.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Children have excellent opportunities to independently choose and explore stimulating and interesting resources which actively promote their learning through fun, imaginative and creative experiences. Children respond well to high expectations and they develop positive behaviour and friendships. They make outstanding progress in the prime areas of learning and develop skills so they are well prepared for future learning. Achievements are carefully tracked and accurately assessed. Children with low starting points make rapid progress. A typical comment from a parent was: 'They totally focus on children's well-being and happiness here; nothing is too much trouble'. Results in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Profile scores are high at 90.2%, well exceeding national expectations. Year on year the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest is narrowing. Partnerships with the school are seamless. Typical comments from parents were: 'I could not hope for a better transition for my child' and 'The centre exceeds my expectations'.

A variety of methods are used to share information on how to keep children safe with families. Early intervention work helps protect children and prevent difficult situations escalating. A parent described the impact of individual support as 'meaning everything' because it gave the family the 'building blocks to move on with their lives'. Parents were able to describe how they are more able to deal with emergency situations now, following attendance on first aid courses. The centre provides free home safety checks and safety equipment can be provided to minimise hazards in the home if required.

A strong drive is in place to promote healthier lifestyles. Healthy eating is well promoted. Shocking visual images of dental decay caused by neglect and the sugar content of everyday drinks and foods strongly encourage healthier choices. Children have lots of good opportunities to enjoy fun, physical activities and to develop their coordination, balance, and gross and fine motor skills. Although a majority of mothers initiate breastfeeding, the number sustaining breastfeeding is below the national average at 22.7%. Suitable strategies are in place to discourage smoking, particularly in pregnancy. The centre has identified these key performance indicators as areas for improvement in their action plan.

A few working parents are contributing to decision making by being members of the advisory board. The centre values parents as partners and they are eager to involve more parents in helping the centre with its work. Parents described enjoying attending a wide range of learning opportunities which has helped raised their confidence, for example using computers. Others are more self-reliant if they have to deal with injuries following 'First Aid' training. More parents are now beginning to be ready to work as volunteers. Several were keen to support the centre if methods to do this were less formal. Adults often progress from one course to another and all achievements are extremely well celebrated. Adults' individual learning records promote good progression routes onto further education 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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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
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How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides a very welcoming environment. Many parents complimented the centre's high standards of cleanliness and the calm, purposeful atmosphere throughout. Displays, resources and equipment are of high quality. The learning environment is rich in enabling opportunities and activities for children. Stimulating resources are presented attractively to invite children's use and they promote sustained periods of play, exploring and creating. Provision to help children learn and develop is outstanding.

The centre's services and activities are well attended. Parents value good opportunities at the 'Bumps and Babies', 'Creative Play', 'Mini Movers' and 'Stay and Play' sessions. They also enjoy additional services such as 'Caterpillar Music' at the centre or 'Rhyme Time' at the library. During all these events parents are able to see and learn from the good practice in action across all the prime areas of children's learning, with staff acting as good role models.

Recent changes in staffing arrangements have promoted closer working relationships with other local children's centres and reciprocal data effectively collect families' attendance at different centre settings. Enhanced outreach work ensures that good opportunities are in place to work more closely with target groups such as teenage and lone parents, and workless families. Individual family needs and circumstances are well assessed to ensure suitable support is provided for them. Firm plans are in place to employ a new breastfeeding support worker and to improve integrated working with the newly appointed health visitor.

A good range of information is available to parents and this can be translated into relevant languages if required. Useful information on domestic violence has been suitably placed where it can be discreetly accessed. Adults know they can turn to the centre for support, particularly in times of crisis. The centre staff team are trained to deal sensitively with difficult situations. As a result, the quality of care, guidance and support is good.

High quality adult training courses and family learning are regularly delivered to users. The centre promotes individualised, purposeful learning very well. Good use is made of prior interests, knowledge and achievements to raise aspirations. Adults learn to make jewellery, or puppets to enrich 'Super Stories'. They become familiar with English and numeracy to support their children's rapid learning. Parents who have English as an additional language access 'English for Speakers of other Languages' (ESOL) courses provided by the local authority. The centre runs its own high quality crèche which enables many parents to attend training such as the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL), reassured that their children are safe and happy nearby. The numbers of adults taking up these opportunities are increasing. The Jobcentre provides the centre with access to local job vacancies and advice and support, as required. The centre has a useful kiosk which parents can access for further information.

The 'Rowdy Robots' is a popular, specific group set up for fathers. Plans are in place to consult with fathers further to find out what services might further increase their 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	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The head of centre and the senior leadership team are highly skilled and experienced early years practitioners. Governance and accountability arrangements are good. Areas of strength are recognised and areas for development are astutely identified. Although changes to staff halted progress temporarily, new systems are now embedding and beginning to have an impact. The local authority and the governing body of the school provide the centre with effective support and challenge, holding the centre to account well for its work.

Robust arrangements are in place for professional supervision and day-to-day management is well organised. The centre team work well together with partners to continually improve all areas of their work. Self-evaluation is mostly accurate and used to set ambitious targets to secure future improvements in outcomes, especially for those families in target groups.

Strong partnerships are emerging with parents, who are seen as important partners. The centre regularly uses parents' views to shape services to meet their needs. The centre recognises the vital role parents play in their child's development and they are keen to encourage more to become involved in the governance of the centre or in volunteering roles. Children are actively encouraged to share their views, and their interests are well responded to.

Most partnerships are good and promote fully integrated working, whilst other partnerships are still developing. Although health teams are not based at the centre, a designated room is available to conduct assessments of children. Strong links are in place with the local childminder network and they regularly meet at the centre. Good relationships have been developed with the relatively new family support worker and the outreach worker now involved in the work of this centre. Close links with the local private day care providers further enhance children's transitions into school. Most partners are sharing some evidence of the impact of their work with the centre. The sharing of resources, expertise, provision and training with partners helps to secure good value for money.

Equality and diversity are promoted well due to the centre's inclusive ethos and approach. The centre highly values and regularly celebrates the festivals of a range of different beliefs and cultures. The centre has a sensitive approach to sharing information about cultural differences and only shows positive images. Staff are actively seeking to engage more of the few families from ethnic minorities living in their area. Disabled children and those with special educational needs are very well supported and are provided with specific, additional support to meet any identified need.

The centre has a high regard for safeguarding, and good practice is adopted across all areas of the centre's work. Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and the centre is very secure. Supervised contact sessions are held at the centre with families. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used effectively to target specific, tailored support for families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Clear protocols are in place for sharing information between relevant agencies within and outside the centre. Case studies evidence the positive impact of early intervention work.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	2

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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Thorpe Hesley Children's Centre on 17 and 18 October 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

It was a pleasure to hear how much you value the good services the centre provides. You told us how much you appreciate the high standards of cleanliness at the centre and the high-quality play resources. You said children thoroughly look forward to attending the centre and it gives every child 'a good start'. The inspectors agree with the positive views expressed by you and recognise that the centre provides excellent learning opportunities for you all. Children who attend the centre services make outstanding progress in their achievements.

Leadership and management of the centre are good and the centre's provision is also good. The centre staff are working hard to improve outcomes for you and your families. The centre provides a safe place for you where you can be sure of a warm welcome. Safeguarding families is high priority and you are provided with good quality care, support and guidance. The centre promotes healthy lifestyles well. You were extremely positive about the range of healthy snacks the centre provides. We have asked staff to work with their health partners to support more mothers to breastfeed if you choose to do this. We have also asked the centre to find ways to help reduce the number of mothers smoking, particularly during pregnancy.

Those of you we spoke to told us how much you enjoy attending the 'Bumps and Babies', 'Creative Learning', 'Mini Movers' and 'Stay and Play' sessions and how you have developed your understanding of the importance of play. You said you trust the centre workers and find them friendly and very helpful.

You told us about the range of different training courses and family learning you have attended and the changes that you have made to your lives. Several of you were positive about the impact of 'First Aid' and the 'Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning' (SEAL) programme you have attended which helps you understand your child's feelings and how to cope with challenge. Some of you told us how much you enjoy socialising with one another and how you have learnt practical ways to support your child, for example through the use of star charts to promote children's positive behaviour at home.

A few of you have important roles as volunteers. We have asked the centre to look at ways in which more of you can act as volunteers if you want to do this. We have also asked the centre to consider more informal ways you can be involved in the governance of the centre to help it continually improve.

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

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