

# Inspection report for Tadcaster Children's Centre

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Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	407031
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Reporting inspector	Lorraine Rowson-Clark HMI

Centre leader	Julie Ledger
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Manor Farm Youth Centre St Joseph's Street Tadcaster North Yorkshire LS24 9HA
Telephone number	01609 797038
Fax number	01937 833851
Email address	julie.ledger@northyorks.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Tadcaster East Community Primary School 121446
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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Piccadilly Gate  
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Manchester  
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[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
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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 or discussions with managers and staff from the centre and the local authority, parents, the vice chair of the steering group and a number of partner agencies including: health, commissioned early years staff, children's services, Jobcentre Plus, the youth service, and one headteacher. They observed the centre's work, including some centre activities, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Tadcaster Children's Centre was designated as a phase two centre in December 2007. It is directly operated by North Yorkshire County Council and works closely with one other centre. There is a steering group in place. The centre is housed in the youth services building in the centre of Tadcaster. It also operates services and activities from Tadcaster East Centre at the nearby Tadcaster East Primary School. In addition, a stay and play session operates from the nearby village of Ulleskelf.

Over the last 18 months there have been four different centre managers. The current manager has been in post since 29 October 2012. The centre serves an area which includes both the town centre and outlying rural villages. The reach area includes four primary schools. The children's centre fulfils its core purpose by the provision of a range of services including child and family health services, advice on parenting and access to specialist services, for example ante-natal and post-natal groups.

Tadcaster is described as an affluent area and six of the centre's seven lower super output areas are in the 70% least deprived category nationally. There are 480 children under the age of five years living in the centre's reach area, of which 317 (66%) are registered with the centre. There are 40 children (8.3%) living in households dependent on workless benefits and 31 of these are registered with the centre. An estimated 45 children (9.4%) live

in poverty. The population is predominantly of White British heritage with a small number of children from a variety of minority ethnic groups, of which 17 are registered with the centre.

Children's levels of knowledge and skills on entry to early years provision are below those generally expected for their age.

## 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**

<b>3</b>
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

<b>3</b>
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## Main findings

Tadcaster Children's Centre has, over the last 18 months, endured a significant period of change, with four different centre managers. Despite this, the centre satisfactorily meets the needs of children and families within its reach area. This is, in the main, due to the strong commitment, drive and determination demonstrated by centre staff.

Clear risk assessments ensure families are and feel safe in the centre and there are particularly effective systems in place to protect those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, including robust staff vetting arrangements and safeguarding procedures. Referral procedures are clear and centre staff have a thorough knowledge of the centre's safeguarding policy. Staff work particularly well with health partners, the early intervention team and children's social care to protect vulnerable children and clear records are maintained relating to those subject to a child protection plan or those involved in the Common Assessment Framework process.

Families enjoy the activities to play, learn and have fun together. Children particularly enjoy the outdoor play opportunities at the stay and play session at nearby Tadcaster East Centre. Parents are developing their parenting skills well and have access to a wide range of support to improve their economic and social well-being. However, the centre receives very little information from partners about the progress parents make after they have been signposted elsewhere for support in their learning or in seeking employment, so is not always aware of how successful signposting has been.

There are opportunities for users to express their views through evaluations and questionnaires and some are active members of the parent forum which feeds into the steering group. However, the steering group is currently being revised to cover the Selby district, serving five centres in total, and draft terms of reference have yet to be formally agreed and adopted. Currently, parents are not fully involved in the steering group itself, although there are plans to ensure their views are appropriately represented.

Care, guidance and support are particular strengths of the centre. Parents report that in times of crisis the centre is a safe place to get rapid and personalised help and support. Parent support advisors work very well with partner agencies; they offer an invaluable service to families and are described by some parents as 'fantastic'.

The centre has a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement. The local authority provides regular scrutiny and challenge and the new centre manager already has an understanding of what is needed for the centre to move forward. Currently, the centre's self-assessment is comprehensive but does not always provide sufficient evidence of the impact that centre services have on improving the life chances of families in the reach area. In addition, development plans for improvement are complex and do not always show clear success criteria so it can be difficult for the centre to know when it has been successful.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve self-evaluation to robustly identify the difference that the centre is having on improving outcomes for families so that the resulting development plans are well-targeted, with clear, measurable outcomes and success criteria.
- Encourage more families to take a more active role in decision making and holding the centre to account through involvement with the parent forum and the steering group.
- The local authority should clarify the arrangements with partner agencies, such as Jobcentre Plus and adult learning services, to ensure that the centre receives information about the progression that families make to further their learning and seek employment.

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

<b>3</b>
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The centre demonstrates a firm commitment to ensuring families have appropriate access to services which will improve their health and well-being. Health literature is available to families throughout the centre and effective partnerships with health visitors ensure families have access to advice and guidance on a range of health issues, including breastfeeding, weaning and immunisations. The centre does not receive centre-specific health data but can show that breastfeeding initiation rates in the Selby district have improved from 66.6% in 2008/09 to 72.1% in 2010/11, although the percentage of mothers who sustain

breastfeeding at six to eight weeks is, at 43.2%, lower than the national average. However, attendance at the recently introduced breastfeeding café is improving steadily and supporting mothers to continue to breastfeed.

The centre makes a concerted effort to ensure that all snacks and drinks provided for children at centre activities are healthy and nutritious. However, the centre has not had the resources recently to offer courses in healthy eating or healthy cooking, which some parents express an interest in. In addition, some adult physical activities, such as pram pushes are no longer functioning. Despite this, obesity rates at Reception Year are at 4.8%, which is well below the national figure.

The centre is particularly effective at ensuring families' safety. Clear risk assessments and good safety arrangements are in place for all venues used by the centre. Targeted families can receive free resources and safety checks in their homes and safety reminders are common features of all activities. As a result, parents are effectively increasing their understanding of how to keep their children safe. In addition, families say that they feel safe in the centre and are confident to share concerns with centre staff, knowing that they will be helped and supported. Parent support advisors carefully match support to individual needs, particularly for those with a child protection plan, those subject to the Common Assessment Framework processes and looked after children. Staff and partner agencies demonstrate a good knowledge of the centre's safeguarding procedures and work effectively together to ensure those families whose circumstances make them vulnerable are supported well.

Good support is offered to local childcare provision and all early years practitioners, including childminders, have access to a wide range of learning and development opportunities which are provided by the local authority. Inspection reports show that all non-domestic early years' settings are graded good or better in the reach area and no childcare provision is graded inadequate. As a result of high quality provision, children make good progress in their learning and development and the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores are improving. Data show that the percentage of children achieving at least 78 points across the scales with at least six points in each of the scales for communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development rose from 62.8% in 2011 to 72.7% in 2012. Equally, the gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest narrowed from 28.3% in 2011 to 26.9% in 2012. 'Stay and Play' sessions are popular with parents and adults report that they enjoy their learning activities, particularly those who have attended 'Small Talk', a six week course for parents with their children.

Children behave well in activities and show care and concern for one another. Parents report that their behaviour management skills have improved as a result of the support offered by the centre. One said, 'Things are calmer at home because I now keep to routines.' The centre gives users opportunities to contribute to shaping centre services through feedback on activities. In addition, the centre's 'You Said, We Did' board displays some parents' requests and the centre's responses to these. Some parents take an active role on the parent forum which feeds into the steering group, although none are currently active on the

steering group as this group is being revised and draft terms of reference have yet to be formally agreed and adopted. Centre managers are keen to further increase participation in decision making by parents by giving them more confidence to speak about issues which affect them.

Appropriate support is given to improving families' economic stability, including advice on financial issues, access to training and employment services. Adults are signposted to accredited learning courses and are supported in their pursuit of employment through the centre's advertising of jobs and access to a computer for accessing Jobcentre Plus services. However, it is not clear what arrangements are in place to ensure that the centre receives feedback from adult learning services and Jobcentre Plus about the progress that parents make. Consequently, the centre is not fully aware of how successful their signposting is.

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>3</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>2</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>2</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>3</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>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

Assessment is used generally well to determine the needs of families within the community and ensure that services meet individual needs. Registrations have increased significantly over the last year and the latest data show that 66% of children aged under five are now registered with the centre. Staff are aware of some difficulties and challenges faced by families within its reach area, such as those who feel isolated in the community, and work effectively to support and encourage them to join in activities and establish their own support networks. The new centre manager has yet to determine all the needs in the community but is already aware of requests for additional services, such as more activities during school holidays and a grandparents' group. Recently, the centre has been restricted because of staffing changes, however, new early years workers have now been appointed and are due to start working in at the centre very shortly.

Good welfare support systems are in place to help those most in need of support. Parents, particularly those from target groups, receive well targeted support from a wide range of

professionals, including health, social care, and community services. Additionally, good care, guidance and support, together with effective work with partner agencies secure swift support to families in times of crisis. For example, families moving into a local hostel receive rapid assessment of needs and those moving into new housing may receive help in carpeting and furnishing their homes. Parents describe staff as 'very welcoming and helpful' and case studies show that the support given makes a discernible difference to families, who are fully appreciative of the help they receive.

There is good provision to help children learn and develop. Activities are well planned and rooms are adapted effectively within the centre and in other venues to provide stimulating learning environments. Parents value activities which stimulate their child's play and learning and offer them the opportunity to meet with other parents. Good examples of outreach and support work include 'Stay and Play' sessions, parenting programmes, baby massage and baby yoga. The centre supports teenage parents in accessing an existing young parents' group run at another centre. Adults are signposted to learning opportunities and parenting courses can be supported by crèches to support those families needing childcare.

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>3</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.</b>	<b>2</b>

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

**3**

Despite a significant number of changes in the leadership of the centre during the last 18 months, there are clear management procedures in place with effective line management supervision, particularly for individual case supervision. The steering group is currently re-developing its role in providing support and challenge to the centre, although clear plans are in place to support this process. Management are keen to further increase parental involvement in decision making and in holding the centre to account.

Self-evaluation is comprehensive but sometimes concentrates on what the centre is doing, rather than on the difference it is making to families' lives. As a result, some self-evaluation grades are overly generous. Families using the centre are invited to evaluate the impact of services they receive and responses are taken into account when developing provision. Complex development plans identify the way forward but do not always show clear success criteria for the centre to know when it has been successful. The centre focuses on sustainable activities with due regard for effective financial oversight. This, together with at least satisfactory outcomes, ensures the centre offers satisfactory value for money. However, the enthusiasm and drive of the new centre manager result in a tangible determination for improvement. Staff morale is high and the staff team are eager for a period of growth and development.



The centre actively promotes inclusive practice throughout all activities. Sound policies support the centre in fully meeting its statutory duties in relation to equality and diversity. Good services are offered to disabled children and children with disabled parents and a concerted effort is made to reduce barriers to access. Effective partnerships and relationships between staff and key agencies are improving outcomes for users. Data show that the achievement gap between groups of users is narrowing.

Safeguarding requirements are fully met. Robust systems are in place to check the suitability of those working with families, including Criminal Records Bureau checks. Safeguarding training is comprehensive and significantly enhances staff's awareness of their safeguarding and child protection responsibilities. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of procedures and carry safeguarding contact details on the back of their ID badges for ease of reference at all times. Robust procedures, clear protocols for sharing information and strong partnerships with other agencies ensure that needs are prioritised effectively.

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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</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>3</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>2</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>2</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>2</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>3</b>

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

The findings from a random sample of the most recent inspections of local childcare provision and schools have contributed the centre report and judgments.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Tadcaster Children's Centre on 1 and 2 November 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall with a number of good features.

As part of the inspection we visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's documentation, and talked with children and adults, including parents and carers, staff, and partnership workers. We were pleased to speak to so many of you about the centre's work and to listen to your views, which you expressed very clearly.

You will be aware that the centre has, over the last 18 months, endured a significant period of change, and has had four different centre managers. Despite this, it has continued to satisfactorily meet the needs of children and families within its area. This is, in the main, due to the strong commitment, drive and determination shown by the staff.

There are good systems in place to make sure that all families are safe and feel safe in the centre. The centre is particularly good at protecting those whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Arrangements for checking staff's suitability to work with children are robust and all staff know what to do to protect those in need.

Many of you told us that you enjoy playing, learning and having fun with your children and that your children particularly enjoy the outdoor play opportunities at the 'Stay and Play' session at nearby Tadcaster East Centre. You told us that you are developing your parenting skills well and that the centre helps you to get support with financial issues, learning and employment. However, we noted that the centre receives very little information about the progress you make after you have been signposted elsewhere, so it is not always aware of how successful the help was that you were given. We have, therefore, asked that they clarify the arrangements with other services so that they know how successful they are in helping you.

There are opportunities for you to express your views through evaluations and questionnaires and some of you are active members of the parent forum which feeds into the steering group although, currently, you are not involved in the steering group itself. We have asked the centre to encourage more of you to become involved in decisions which affect your centre and in holding the centre to account. You can help by telling the centre staff or parent forum what it is that you like about the centre and what can be done to make things better for you.

We were impressed to see how well the centre cares for you and supports you. You told us that the centre is a safe place for you to get rapid and personalised help and that the parent support advisors are 'fantastic' when you need them to help you through difficult times.

The centre has plans in place to keep improving the services offered to you although it is difficult for the centre to always know when it has made things better. To help them, we have asked that future plans include clear success criteria so that it can show when it has been successful. The new centre manager already has an understanding of what is needed to make things even better for you and the whole staff team are determined to make the centre as good as it can be.

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

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