

Inspection report for Upper Horfield Children's Centre

Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	410719
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Upper Horfield Community School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Upper Horfield CC URN EY 364659

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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and staff, the headteacher of Upper Horfield Community School, the deputy head of the secondary school, representatives of the governors, members of the advisory board, parents and representatives of partner agencies and the local authority. Telephone interviews were held with partner health professionals. The inspectors also held informal talks with children and parents. They observed the centre's work and looked at a wide range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation and improvement plan.

Information about the centre

Upper Horfield Children's Centre is a phase two centre which opened in September 2008 under the direction of Upper Horfield Community School, but it is managed by an advisory board who report regularly to the governing body. The nursery provision has developed from an established playgroup within the local community and additional childcare all sited on the community campus of the school and children's centre. While there is care for children aged two to five years, the nursery classes are not part of the school's Department for Education number and are therefore funded solely from the free nursery entitlement and parental income. The centre is working towards becoming a 0–11 facility, providing family support to the age of eight, and childcare to the age of 11. Upper Horfield is an urban area with a changing population. The estate is increasingly culturally diverse, with a mix of home owners (63%), those who rent from the council (20%), those renting privately

(13%) and those in social housing (2%). Some of the housing is in flats. There has been a major rebuilding exercise and new families have moved into the area as a result. In past years the area was designated as a Government Neighbourhood Renewal area. With the make-up of the area changing over time there has been movement in the deprivation statistics for Upper Horfield. There are 656 children aged under four years within the six lower Super Output Areas that make up the reach for the children’s centre. Two hundred and ninety-nine of those children fall into the top 30% most disadvantaged in the country, with a further 120 in the 30–40% range. There are, however, pockets of more affluent families making up 155 children aged under four years.

Upper Horfield also has some transient population, including students. The composition of the area is rapidly changing: 49.2% are White British; Black British, Asian and families of mixed background each account for another 5% of the families and, as yet, the rest have not stated their ethnicity. Of the under five year olds in the reach, 15% are from minority ethnic groups. Fifteen per cent of parents of children aged under four years in the area are single; 6% of children have disabled parents, 1% of mothers are teenagers and 21% (140) of children live in workless households.

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

Upper Horfield Children’s Centre is outstanding because of its very high quality provision and excellent targeted services. These are very carefully adjusted to meet individual circumstances. The centre provides information to 100% of the families with new babies due to its excellent relationship with health visitors and it engages very effectively with families, including the most vulnerable. It is, for example, adept at identifying and engaging with the families who often move in and out of the reach area. All target groups are involved fully in the centre’s activities, including lone parents, young parents, and families with children who have special educational needs. The centre makes exceptionally good use of the information it gathers, as well as that provided by the local authority, so that it’s outstanding provision is very

well targeted to local needs. The health issues identified as areas of concern in the locality are understood by the staff and the advisory board. They are all involved in tackling the issues and keeping a careful watch on the changing nature of health-related concerns. A very effective leaflet explains to families what the centre is currently doing to help them with these issues by promoting a full course of childhood immunisation, tackling obesity and encouraging better exercise rates.

Clear communication is a notable strength of the setting. Parental feedback gathered from all activities is used effectively to develop and improve its services even further. Comments from families were full of praise for the centre and staff are described as 'warm and sensitive'. The cheerful welcome individual families receive was much appreciated by those who had previously felt isolated. The innovative 'Families and School Together' (FAST) programme has been a powerful tool in drawing the community together and tackling common problems faced by families. Parents said that it had helped improve their parenting skills and they valued all they had learned about other cultures, including the delicious meals they ate together.

The on-site day care includes placements for the most vulnerable as well as many families who pay. One parent rightly commented that it 'lives up to all it promises'. The daycare provision is outstanding and a significant strength of the centre. The various other groups, such as 'Stay and Play', also stimulate families and children to learn in a happy atmosphere so, overall, children progress exceptionally well through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Local childminders also get excellent support from the centre to develop their practice. There are high quality resources and displays throughout the centre; many of these are interactive, so adults and children stop to look and try things out. The 'Every Child A Talker' (ECAT) programme, with its expert practitioners, is used throughout the setting and has had a profound impact on improving children's communication, language and literacy. The achievement gaps between the 20% most disadvantaged children and the rest, in the daycare provision and the on-site primary school, is narrowing significantly. Both boys and girls increasingly enter school with skills at the appropriate level for their age.

Highly effective links with partner agencies ensure that health, learning and social care services are well thought through for all families. A flexible programme of activities supports both group and individual needs. Individuals who attend the centre say they feel empowered. They are increasingly confident enough to give their time as volunteers; this successfully builds their personal, parental and academic skills. Exemplary attention to the inclusion of everyone is evident in the entire centre's work. A very high number of families benefit from the well-adapted activities that celebrate the locality's cultural diversity. Barriers faced by some families are tackled creatively; all spoken to confirm they never feel judged and are always made welcome and helped, especially in the event of a family crisis.

The outstanding manager provides inspirational leadership and management. Excellence is diligently sought and is achieved in all aspects of the centre's work. There is effective partnership with the dynamic headteacher of the on-site community school. The advisory board reports to the school governing body and

includes parents who serve on both groups. The board has begun to diversify its membership and draw in a wider variety of parents using the centre. The improvement plan is strategic and has carefully identified priorities with specific and measurable targets each year. These are correctly aimed at improving health outcomes for families, including those in its target groups.

The leadership and management team is effective in supporting the rapidly changing community because they have developed some excellent local networks across and between services. They have built the self-esteem of both the long-established and newly arrived families, especially through the FAST project. Outcomes are improving exceptionally strongly, especially in education and family well-being. The centre provides outstanding value for money, on a severely limited budget, judged by its strong impact on improving community cohesion and in raising families' aspirations for themselves, their children and the community. The staff's dedicated work is an example to all. There are very high levels of involvement and families are exceptionally positive about the centre's work. The centre demonstrates outstanding capacity for further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Sustain the high quality of outcomes by:
 - ensuring the improvement plan is monitored and flexibly adapted as the local families' health needs change
 - further diversify the advisory board.

How good are outcomes for families?

1

The centre involves families exceptionally well in a range of activities which promote and develop their understanding of healthy lifestyles. The level of sustained breastfeeding has increased by 10% and is above the national rate. Parents speak highly of the quality of staff support. The centre's 'health group' is very effective in engaging families in activities that develop their awareness and understanding of healthy lifestyles and the causes of things like low birth-weight babies. It is well targeted and runs regularly for a few weeks at a time. The health issues discussed are well tailored to the needs of the participants. The FAST programme, with its sports skills element, has led to an impressive take-up of active lifestyles by families in the centre and the primary school. The growth of vegetables and fruit has encouraged families to extend the range of food they eat and they have had success in making chutney to sell for charity. Fitness sessions including a dance programme and yoga. 'Wake and Shake' greatly assists toddlers' and children's physical skills and aims to prevent the rising obesity rate seen in last year's five-year-olds' weight statistics. The strong links with health visitors are being used effectively to further encourage parents to have their children immunised and centre staff work hard to inform parents about the benefits of this through displays and focused sessions.

Families, including those who have experienced domestic violence, say they feel safe, confident and relaxed in the centre and this is because safeguarding procedures are extremely robust. Children show that they know how to keep themselves safe, for example, when crossing the road, as high quality programmes involving sign language and specific 'fun footsteps' help them know where to stand on the pavement and when to cross safely. Children throughout the community, including those who are in the care of the local authority, have recently been successfully involved in a multi-agency fire prevention arts project in the centre. This resulted in everyone keeping safe on Bonfire Night and Halloween. Children are exceptionally well looked after in the centre and parents benefit from parenting skills activities, particularly in the areas of behaviour management and home safety. There is a marked reduction in anti-social behaviour as a result of the preventative work done with the centre and the community youth police support officer. Child protection arrangements are excellent and any signs that a child may be at risk are addressed swiftly by the well- trained staff, thus keeping potentially vulnerable children very safe. Excellent multi-agency partnership working means that children are very well supported by the Common Assessment Framework process.

The high quality play sessions, including the crèche, provided while parents attend courses, are lively and stimulating and mean that families have fun and learn together. There has been a very significant narrowing of the gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the highest, at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, and this is partly because of the strong focus on early language and communication skills. The numbers achieving 78 points across all areas of early years learning rose significantly from 41% in 2010 to 67% in 2011 and again in 2012. All infants make rapid progress from their starting points, and parenting programmes help the most vulnerable families develop confidence and self-esteem.

The recent multi-agency job fair showed parents ways to overcome barriers and find local job opportunities and more advanced education courses. The centre's literacy and numeracy courses are very well attended and have a high success rate. The centre now offers a second-level maths course as a result of parental requests and increased confidence. Parents reported that they are delighted by the certificates and awards and that they have achieved much more than they originally thought possible.

The centre now has some parents as volunteers who began on basic-level courses. The manager and her staff see the potential in every parent and child and provide parents with increased confidence in applying for jobs, through, for example, providing access to computers in the primary school and guidance to write curriculum vitae. There are examples of parents building higher levels of confidence as they volunteer to run courses in the centre, for example the healthy cooking course, which is highly valued by families. Parents express their views freely and often; they participate in social and learning events and serve on the advisory board. As a result, they contribute very effectively to the life and development of the centre.

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	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	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	1
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	1

How good is the provision?

1

Centre and school staff, partner agencies and the local authority use their exceptionally good knowledge of their families to adapt and provide services which are sharply targeted to meet specific needs. For example, they recently provided support for individuals to deal with debt and managing money. Programmes include ones which focus on safety, self-esteem, food nutrition and being active. Parents who are not confident, suffer isolation, or have to deal with health issues, also benefit from a variety of art and craft activities. Their evaluations show how this impacts positively on their subsequent well-being and willingness to try to learn new things.

Attendance registers are completed at all events and to identify attendance levels for the most disadvantaged families. All staff take account of the priority families in all their activities and make excellent use of the outstanding recording systems to monitor attendance and follow up if anyone is missing. The ECAT intervention by expertly trained staff has significantly enhanced children's language skills; children start school with significantly improved communication skills and this successfully underpins their future learning. The centre had a thriving well attended 'Dads Group' and is planning another; the Dads currently attend the stay and play sessions. The centre is always looking for new ways to engage with the changing community. Consequently, they have supported other existing stay-and-play sessions out into the community, making sure they went to the areas of most need. Provision includes joined-up work with the secondary school which has had an excellent impact on encouraging some potentially vulnerable teenagers to avoid early pregnancy.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

The centre manager provides inspirational leadership and she encourages everyone involved with the centre to aim as high as possible whether they are staff, children, parents and carers. Self-evaluation is based fully on robust, measurable outcomes for activities and the impact on the families. If staff want to introduce a new group or activity they are expected to present the evidence to support the need for the new service and show how the expected outcomes relate to the key local priorities. As a result of this sharp focus, the high quality improvement plan is firmly based on the exact needs of the locality and target groups. The centre runs smoothly and staff performance is monitored closely. The amount of staff supervision and support is individually tailored to need and there are excellent opportunities for individuals' development.

Governance is outstanding as it is built on the school governing body's experience. The advisory board has grown into a well-structured 'fit for purpose' board and has the ability to challenge the centre and staff to ensure initiatives are well focused. In the past year, there was a very high satisfaction rate in the centre from families and staff. Working in partnerships and with other agencies is a significant strength and the integration of services is highly effective in meeting the needs of families.

Resources are directed very effectively towards meeting the needs of all target groups, including those most in need of support, for example, those with mental health issues or subject to domestic violence. The centre is exceptionally inclusive and promotes equality and diversity in a locality where there has been some unrest as a result of the large-scale housing redevelopment and changing demographics. Staff found ways to introduce groups to each other so that now they acknowledge each other as people with a range of talents and culinary skills.

There are exceptionally strong links with the health visitors. The multi-agency work is a significant strength. Safeguarding is outstanding as all staff are exceptionally well trained in safeguarding and child protection procedures. Robust recruitment procedures mean that all appointments are carefully scrutinised to ensure everyone's safety. Families feel exceptionally safe at the centre because of the good security. Outdoor areas are secure but the long wait for a decision to allocate some additional outdoor play space, from the local authority's adjacent car park, is undermining

efforts to get the children in the 'stay and play' room sufficient exercise to combat the rising incidence of obesity. Despite this, overall provision and outcomes are excellent. There are very high levels of involvement and families are exceptionally positive about the centre's work. As a result, the centre provides outstanding value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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

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

Upper Horfield Community Primary School inspection report URN 108970 and evidence from the day-care inspection conducted on 22 November.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Upper Horfield Children's Centre on 21 and 22 November 2012. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you to all of you who took the time to talk with us about your experiences and involvement with the centre and the Families and Schools Together (FAST) project. We enjoyed meeting you and your children and finding out how much the centre means to you and the huge difference it makes to many lives. It is obvious that you are very pleased with the centre's services and especially appreciate the centre staff because they have an exceptional understanding of the needs of local families. We found they had adapted services to meet your needs very well. As you said, they are a sensitive team committed to helping you and your families; they successfully spot those of you who need the most help. They are there in a crisis and go to extra lengths to offer support when the need arises. We were particularly pleased to see the centre reaches so many families, including those who are new to the area or in the area temporarily.

The exceptionally good partnership working between the different services who work at the centre means that families get excellent levels of joined-up support. All staff have a close eye on your families' safety and well-being and, as a result, you get very high levels of support if any problems arise. Health visitors, the centre staff and other professionals are readily available for you to ask for help and advice and this means children's development is exceptionally strongly supported. You and your children are increasingly adopting healthier lifestyles as a result of the centre's guidance and examples.

The learning and development opportunities within the centre are outstanding. The excellent range of activities and training on offer means that families develop skills and knowledge to help them become more successful. For example, many parents learn how to cook more healthily while others are supported in learning skills which support them in returning to education and/or employment. All staff in the various groups provide exceptionally high quality learning activities. These help your children to learn and develop and also help parents find out how you can support your children's learning through playing with them at home.

Safeguarding arrangements are excellent within the centre. We agree with you that all staff are friendly and have made a very welcoming place where their kindness leads to trusting relationships with all families. This makes you confident to ask for any help and advice you may want. The staff team work together exceptionally well to ensure any issues concerning children's welfare are identified early and the right level of action is taken to keep all children safe. Please help them by encouraging all the families you know to get their children vaccinated and by ensuring your children have plenty of exercise so they keep healthy.

The manager is a great role model and inspiration to everyone. She is supported by an excellent team and the school's dynamic headteacher. The advisory board is

developing well and we have asked the centre's leaders to continue to develop a wider range of people involved in the management of the centre.. All staff share the aim of providing activities of the highest quality and they deliver excellent services to all local families in need. The management team and the local authority continually review all services and frequently ask for your feedback to ensure services are having the very best impact. We noted the centre uses 'best practice' systems to track the on-going progress of all children and parents to demonstrate how well the centre has supported them. We think that Upper Horfield staff should work in partnership with other children's centres to promote their excellent systems in support of others.

Thank you again to everyone who spoke to us. We are very grateful and wish you and your families every success for the future.

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