

Inspection report for Sherburn Children's Centre

Local authority	North Yorkshire
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Centre leader	Julie Ledger
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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 managers and staff from the centre and the local authority, representatives from partner agencies, one headteacher, the vice chair of the steering group and parents.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Sherburn Children's Centre was designated as a phase two centre in September 2007. It provides the full core offer for children's centres and is directly operated by North Yorkshire County Council. The centre works closely with Tadcaster Children's Centre, which is managed by the same centre manager. The staff team of one manager, two parent support advisers, two early years workers and two administrative workers is shared across the two centres to deliver services. The centre is accommodated in a building adjoining Sherburn in Elmet library in the town centre. A 'Stay and Play' session is delivered from Ulleskelf Village Hall.

There was a restructure in April 2012 with a dedicated Children's Centre Services Manager being appointed to Sherburn and Tadcaster Children's Centres. The present centre manager has been in post since October 2012. The centre serves an area that includes the town centre and outlying rural villages and hamlets. There are six primary schools in the centre's reach area.

Levels of deprivation in the centre's reach area are low to medium, with four lower super output areas in the 70% least deprived category nationally and two in the 30% most deprived category nationally. There are currently 780 children aged under five years living in the reach area and 528 (68%) are registered with the centre. There are 70 children in the

reach area living in households dependent on workless benefits. The population is predominantly of White British heritage. There are 21 children from minority ethnic backgrounds in the area, of whom 14 (67%) are registered with the centre.

In 2011 there was a variable trend in relation to boys' skills and knowledge on entry to early years provision, however 2012 scores showed improvements in all areas of boys' achievement. Overall children's skills and knowledge 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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Sherburn Children's Centre has been subject to a period of change in the past two years, most significantly having three different managers. The current manager has, however, worked in the centre in the past and has been able to identify with the needs of the area quickly and has responded well to them.

The centre provides a wide range of good quality services and activities that are very well matched to meet the needs of children and families in the reach area. Families thoroughly enjoy the opportunities they have in activities to play, learn and have fun together. Parents make links between the activities they do with their children and how their children are developing. They appreciate the friendly and welcoming approach that staff take and comment that they do not feel judged when they use the centre. Parents are developing their parenting and work-related skills very well to improve their economic and social well-being. The centre does not always receive information from partners about the progress of parents or of outcomes when they have signposted a family to a service.

The centre provides families with a safe and secure environment. Together, clear and effective risk assessments, and robust staff vetting and safeguarding procedures help to protect families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) very well with partners from children's social care, health and

the early intervention team. Case records are clear, well maintained and are subject to two levels of scrutiny to ensure the quality of the case work.

The steering group structure covers a total of five children's centre in the Selby area. It is new but clearly understood by members and offers good opportunities for support and challenge to the centre. The centre uses a wide and varied range of methods to consult with users about the centre and the services it offers and parents use these well to give feedback. However, few parents take the opportunity to become active members of the parents' forum from where their views are fed to the steering group.

The centre manager and local area manager have a good overview of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation of most aspects of the centre's work is accurate giving the centre good capacity to sustain improvement. One aspect where the centre could have a more accurate picture of its impact is in health outcomes. The centre is provided with a limited amount of data from health partners and most of the data that are provided are for the Selby area and not specific to the centre's reach.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the involvement of parents in decision making at the centre so that they have a clear voice and visible presence in the newly formed steering group structure.
- Improve systems to monitor the progress and outcomes for families when they have been signposted to other agencies such as Jobcentre Plus for services.
- Health partners should work with the local authority to increase the amount of relevant health-related data provided to the centre, such as the number of women who continue to smoke during pregnancy, and ensure as much as possible is specific to the reach area.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

'Amazing' is how one young parent reflected the impact the centre activities have on families. Parents and children enthusiastically join in activities, such as 'Singamajigs', and use the sessions to build and strengthen their relationships. Families' emotional health is given a high priority. Case studies and parental comments show that parents' growing confidence in parenting and understanding about their child's development, gained at centre activities, contribute significantly to this. Parents are also developing a good understanding about ways in which children can be kept safe and protected. They request support in obtaining home safety equipment and access child-health clinics regularly. Families who are subject to CAF processes, child-in-need work, looked after children and child protection plans engage well with the centre's parent support advisers and make good progress.

There has been sustained work on increasing the number of mothers who continue to feed their babies six-to-eight weeks after giving birth. The breastfeeding peer support volunteer and strategies, such as introducing a breastfeeding café, have had a very positive impact and in the first two quarters of the current reporting year the number of mothers in the reach area sustaining breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks has increased from almost 43% to almost 67%. Parents are increasingly aware of the benefits of a healthy diet and are keen that their children have the opportunity to play and exercise, especially in an outdoor environment. Health messages are becoming embedded and obesity rates for children in the area are well below national indicators.

Children behave very well and demonstrate behaviour that indicates they feel safe in the centre. Relationships in the centre are strong and parents value the way that staff treat them with respect. Parents respond positively to the opportunities to feedback to the centre on its work. However, too few join the parents' forum and some do not know what the parents' forum is. This limits their opportunity to influence decision-making at a higher level in the centre.

Children in the reach area make good progress and the number of children reaching a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased by 12.6% in a one year period. Children and families who need extra support are very well supported by the centre, the early years team and the centre's partnership with a local childcare provider. Adults are actively engaging with the learning and development opportunities available to them. They particularly enjoy the activities that mean they can learn with their children. In addition, a large number progress to courses such as 'Functional English' and, in the last two years, 48 have moved onto employment-related courses such as bookkeeping at level one.

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	3
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?

Care, guidance and support provided by the centre are highly relevant. Displays around the centre are very good quality, well presented and clear; they include easily accessible leaflets and wallet-sized information cards, which parents can take away and read at their leisure. Good and well-established systems are in place to support families who are in most need. Parent support advisers are highly skilled and very knowledgeable about local services. They support families in a wide range of ways such as negotiating with housing agencies for repairs and furnishing houses when families have moved to the area at short notice. Support of this nature has prevented families moving into crisis situations.

The programme of activities and courses offered by the centre is based on a sound assessment of local need, while still reflecting the North Yorkshire County Council Children and Young People's Plan. Individual assessment of need is equally as strong and results in families having tailored support packages delivered to them by a range of professionals who have the relevant experience and expertise. When the centre has signposted parents to a partner agency, such as Jobcentre Plus, as part of a targeted piece of work they routinely monitor the outcome of their involvement. This is not as robust when families are not receiving one-to-one support.

Registrations have increased rapidly over the last three years. The latest data show that 74% of children under five years are registered with the centre. The centre is reaching its priority group which is those families living in the most deprived areas that it serves. Families who use the centre maintain good levels of engagement and retention rates on courses are good.

Activities provided by the centre and its partners are purposeful and have clear objectives linked to the centre's priorities. The main children's centre room is well resourced with high quality equipment and is a good learning environment, particularly for children. Children's activities have a very strong focus on developing children's communication, language and literacy. One parent commented that after spending time in children's centre activities he could see how his child's language and concentration had improved through reading books together. Activities and courses for adults are carefully thought through in order to offer opportunities for progression. This is not restricted to formal, accredited learning; it is also applied to parenting courses and follow-up work delivered by parent support advisers in the centre.

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	2
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 centre has clear and effective line-management systems in place. Staff benefit greatly from the solution-based approach the centre manager has towards their work. Governance and accountability structures are clear and understood by centre staff and partners. The steering group structure is new and has clear terms of reference in place. There is a very strong commitment from members that parental involvement in this aspect of the governance process is increased through the parents' forum. Parents are regularly and routinely invited to comment on the activities and services offered by the centre. Their views are carefully considered and responded to in the 'You said, we did' display. The centre has been less successful in building a regular and substantial attendance at its parents' forum.

Evaluation is an on-going process integrated into all aspects of the centre's work. Data the centre receives are used well in this process. However, data received from health partners are limited and too often the centre has to rely on local knowledge. A review of the role of the parent support advisers and the introduction of early years' workers has resulted in greater use of commissioned services and volunteers to deliver group activities. This enables them to use the parent support advisers' considerable skills in work with families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. This demonstrates that service delivery is regularly reviewed to meet the needs of the area, and illustrates the centre's good capacity to sustain improvement and deliver good value for money.

Attention to the promotion of equality and diversity and the centre's inclusion of disabled children and their families is strong. The centre's reach area is overwhelmingly of White British heritage. The centre has been successful in registering and engaging a high proportion of the minority ethnic families who live in the reach area. Access to services for all is very well supported, taking into account the rural nature of some parts of the centre's reach. To aid wider access to centre services the centre has opened a 'Stay and Play' session at Ulleskelf village hall. The centre has also supported families with circumstances that make them vulnerable who are quite isolated in rural areas to attend services when local public transport has been poor.

The centre fulfils its responsibilities to ensure staff are suitable to work with children very well. Clear and meticulous records are kept of staff vetting checks including a record of the renewal date in line with local authority procedures. Training in safeguarding is prioritised and renewed in line with the statutory guidance for children's centres. Staff's excellent skills and knowledge in this area are reflected in the type of work they carry in their caseloads. They regularly work with families who are involved with the social care team, including working with children who are subject to child protection plans. There are excellent and open communication channels between agencies working with families, and centre staff are highly skilled in instigating CAF processes with 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	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.	3

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

None.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sherburn Children's Centre on 16 and 17 January 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you very much to those of you who spoke to us in meetings and in activity sessions. We found the information you gave us very useful. We also spent some time looking at the comments you have made about the centre and the activities you have used, to help us to make our inspection judgements.

When we visited the centre we found that there has been a lot of change in the past two years, most significantly the centre has had three different managers. The latest manager has worked in the centre before and, as a result, she has been able to find out and understand the needs of the area quickly and has made changes to help with them.

We found that the centre provides you and your families with a wide range of good quality services and activities and that they are helpful in meeting your needs. Those of you we spoke to and the comments we read told us that you thoroughly enjoy the opportunities you have in activities to play, learn and have fun together with your children. We were pleased that you are learning about how the activities you do with your children are helping your children to learn and develop. We found that you appreciate the friendly and welcoming staff and told us that you do not feel judged when you use the centre. We saw evidence that you are developing your parenting and work-related skills very well to improve your families' economic and social well-being. However, we found that the centre is not always given information from partners, such as the adult-learning providers, about how well you are doing when they have signposted you or your family to a service. We have asked the centre to improve how well they do this so that they can follow how well you are doing.

The centre provides you with a safe and secure environment to bring your families to. This is because the centre is good at assessing any risks there might be and at making sure the staff and volunteers who work with you and your families are suitable to do so. Staff use the CAF very well with partners from children's social care, health and the early intervention team to assess your needs and work closely with you to make positive changes. The records

they keep of their work with you are clear, well maintained and have two levels of checking to make sure the quality of the case work is good enough.

The steering group covers a total of five children's centre in the Selby area. It is new but its members understand how the meetings work and what they should be doing at them. The new way of working in the steering group gives its members good opportunities to support and challenge the centre to make sure it is doing the right things for you and your families. We found that the centre uses a wide variety of methods to ask you about the centre and the services and activities it has to offer and that you use those opportunities well. However, not enough of you take the opportunity to become active members of the parents' forum which is an important way for you to make sure your views about the centre are fed to the steering group. We have asked the centre to encourage more of you to attend the parents' forum to express your views.

The centre manager and local area manager have a good understanding of what the centre does well and what it could do better; the centre has good capacity to sustain improvement in its work because of this. However, the information it collects to show the improvement it makes to your health is not as accurate as it should be. The centre is given a limited amount of information from health partners but most of the information that is provided is for the Selby area and not specific to your area. We have asked health partners to work with the centre to provide better information about the health of children and families in your area.

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