

Inspection report for Mortimer House Children's Centre

Local authority	Bradford
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Centre leader	Cathy Presto
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Mortimer House EY337789

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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 Inspector's and one Early Years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the advisory board, The Children's Society and the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Mortimer House Children's Centre was designated in September 2007 and is a Phase Two centre. It is situated in the Thornbury and Bradford Moor area two miles north-east of Bradford city centre. It also provides services from other community venues in the area, for example the Thornbury Centre, Thornbury Primary school and Laisterdyke Enterprise and Business College.

Currently, 1292 children below the age of five years of age are living in the centre reach area with almost all living in the 0% to 30% most deprived areas in the country. Approximately 46% live in the five per cent most deprived areas in the country, 31% live in the 10% most deprived areas in the country, 22% live in the 15% most deprived areas and 1% live in the 30 to 50% most deprived areas. The area is a mix of private, private rented and social housing. Families face issues of poor housing, income and employment deprivation, barriers to housing and local services, and crime and substance misuse.

Approximately 89% of families are from minority ethnic groups, mainly from Pakistani, Asian and Bangladeshi communities, with an increasing number of Eastern European families. For many of these families, English is an additional language. There are also a small number of families who are refugees and asylum seekers. Approximately 11% of families are of White British heritage. The most recent available data show that approximately 45% of children in the reach area are living in households dependant on workless benefit and there are 615

lone parents. On average, 4% of families benefit from the childcare element of the working tax credit and 60 families benefit from financial assistance with childcare costs. In addition, 87% of three- and four-year-olds are accessing their early education entitlement. Some children's levels of skill on entry to Early Years provision are below that expected for their age.

The centre is governed by The Children's Society on behalf of the local authority and has an advisory board made up representatives from the local community, parents and partner professionals. The centre also has a parent forum and holds less formal 'You say' consultations with users.

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

Mortimer House Children's Centre is a good centre overall with some outstanding features. Safeguarding children is given utmost priority by staff at all levels, with excellent quality assurance processes in place to ensure the highest standards of practice stringently. As a result, children are safeguarded exceptionally well.

Exemplary partnerships with other agencies ensure that families have access to a wide range of high quality resources and services delivered by professionals who have an in-depth understanding of their needs. Staff and services are highly valued by users and partners due to the positive impact they have on meeting the needs of, and improving the outcomes for, families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Families using the centre receive outstanding, tailored support and guidance, particularly in times of crisis, from extremely caring, approachable and dedicated staff.

The centre's leadership and management team evaluates the centre's effectiveness well overall and is consequently aware of the centre's strengths and weaknesses. It sets appropriate priority targets that link back to those set by the local authority and The Children's Society and is developing systems to ensure that these are more easily measured. In addition, leaders ensure that they generally have good evidence to demonstrate the

impact centre services and activities are having on the outcomes for families. However, limited evidence is readily accessible to enable the centre to demonstrate fully how it is supporting families to improve their economic and social well-being through monitoring and tracking adults' progress to training and further education and into employment.

Provision for children to play, learn and develop is exceptional. Staff skilfully identify the individual interests and needs of all children accessing centre services, for many of whom English is as an additional language and also often have low starting points, disabilities or complex needs. Staff then expertly plan and provide play and learning experiences that interest and motivate each child, enabling many of them to make outstanding progress.

The centre has successfully enabled almost 67% of children aged up to four years of age and their families from the reach area, all of whom live in one of the most deprived areas in the country, to engage in centre services. This favourable participation rate leaves a further 33% for the centre to involve. Participation and attendance rates of key target groups, such as fathers, children in minority ethnic groups, disabled children and teenage parents in quality services are good overall. This is due to the concerted effort of staff and partners to ensure that provision is closely matched to their needs. As a result, the majority of families in the reach area are accessing the centre services and improving their outcomes, securing good value for money. The centre has good capacity to improve the engagement and outcomes of even more families based on what it has accomplished so far.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the outcomes for even more children and families in the reach area by enabling more of the remaining 33% to engage in the centre services and activities.
- Fully demonstrate the impact of centre services on improving the economic and social well-being of families by:
 - improving systems to enable regular access to data and information regarding the progress families make in developing their employability skills through participating in further education, training, adult learning, and the subsequent progression into employment.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for families accessing the centre are at least good. Children who attend centre activities make outstanding progress in their learning. The highly skilled staff have successfully engaged the interest of parents in their children's learning and development. Consequently, they eagerly add photographs and comments in the learning records that accompany their children to different groups and recognise the improvements they have made in their learning and development. In addition, excellent planning around children's individual needs and interests ensure that children are engaged in their play and motivated

to learn. The impact of this can be seen in the improvements in parents' relationships with their children and the exceptional progress children are making.

A high number of disabled children and children with special educational needs attend the nursery, often with complex needs and very low starting points. In addition, the centre has many children with English as an additional language and planning rigorously focuses on supporting every child to reach their full potential. Robust assessments of children's learning and development show that many children make outstanding progress due to the high-quality, intensive support they receive in the Early Years provision. In addition, the highly effective partnership in place with local schools and Early Years provision enables and supports children and their parents extremely well during times of transition and secures children's readiness for school. Schools report children who have accessed the children's centre are confident, creative and imaginative and are well-prepared for school. They also report that parents are interested in working in partnership with the school to support their children's learning and development.

Families receive very good support and advice with budgeting, debt, credit and loan advice and are enabled to access all the benefits they are entitled to, resulting in improved economic stability and independence. The centre routinely seeks the views of users through a range of consultation exercises and uses these to shape services and ensure that they are meeting their needs.

The centre positively encourages healthy lifestyles of families. Recent data show that 45% of mothers are breastfeeding their babies at six to eight weeks, slightly below the national average of 47%. However, this has greatly increased from 33% the previous year. The numbers of children recorded as obese in Reception Year at school has reduced from 11% to 8%, lower than the national average of 9.4%. A high number of children have received their immunisations. However, more children and families are being identified as having vitamin D deficiency due to lack of sunlight. The centre fully promotes the importance of being outdoors in all weathers to families and encouraging them to visit the doctor to check their vitamin D levels and receive any necessary treatment. The most recent data show a high number of children in the reach area have had dental extractions. The centre promotes good oral health and almost all children have now had their teeth varnished with fluoride. Data now show there have been fewer oral health admissions to hospital and more children are now accessing a dentist.

The centre supports families to make their homes safer and helps prevent accidents and house fires through home visits, community events and activities at the centre. A very low number of emergency admissions of children to hospital have been recorded and there have been no recent house fires. Excellent partnership working ensures that all concerned are kept up to date with any issues regarding the safety and welfare of families. The highly effective systems for assessing users' needs, making referrals and intervening early are having a positive impact on outcomes for children, including all those subject to Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes, looked-after children and children subject to a child protection plan.

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	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

How good is the provision?

2

The centre provides an extremely safe, warm and welcoming environment. Staff are highly regarded by families and partners and have an excellent understanding of individual families' needs. Intensive targeted work with families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable is highly successful in improving their outcomes. Caring, approachable and dedicated staff provide excellent support and guidance. Examples of case studies show how centre staff have intervened swiftly to provide families with exceptional personalised support in significant times of crisis with outstanding results. As some parents stated, 'There are so many people around to support you', 'they built my confidence and self-esteem and I want to go to university now' and 'I don't know what I would have done without the children's centre.'

The centre and partners consult with families meaningfully and share information swiftly. They find out what service those families identified as in most need of support and intervention and those from target groups, need and want. As a result, provision is matched accurately to the needs of families and enables and empowers them to achieve good outcomes. Staff have also worked extremely hard to improve the engagement of more families from the very low numbers previously. Consequently, services are well-attended and the majority of families are engaged in centre services and activities.

The centre provides very good support for parents wishing to volunteer at the centre to gain valuable work experience. A good number of adults are accessing volunteering or training and development opportunities and some have made outstanding progress from often low starting points, for example, securing a place at college and university or successfully gaining employment.

Skilled and well-informed staff successfully support parents to develop their parenting skills and promote their children’s development. Their understanding of the importance of healthy lifestyles and play and learning, for example through the baby club and ‘stay-and-play’ sessions, has improved as a result. At the well-attended sessions, parents and children are fully engaged in their learning as provision is thoughtfully planned to children’s individual interests observed from previous sessions.

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.	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The senior leadership team and centre staff are passionate about the centre’s work and morale is high. Staff have ample opportunities to develop their skills and expertise and are supported very well. They are expertly deployed to their strengths. Staff are led and managed by very strong leaders who are creative and tenacious. This results in an extremely passionate and dedicated staff team who feel highly valued and strive to be the best.

Strong partnership working arrangements exist between local authority leaders and The Children’s Society leaders securing very effective governance and accountability arrangements. They monitor and challenge the centre’s performance robustly through the regular interrogation of data and monitoring visits. However, the centre does not have access to all progress tracking and monitoring information of those looking to return to work or accessing adult learning. As a result, it is not able to demonstrate easily the difference it makes to outcomes for families.

Safeguarding is given the upmost priority. Exemplary record keeping ensures crucial information about families, although stored securely, is easily accessible at all times. There are excellent referral and information-sharing processes between partners and the centre. This ensures that the right support is provided swiftly to families with circumstances that make them most vulnerable. A rigorous safeguarding audit is conducted annually by The Children’s Society to monitor and challenge safeguarding practice at all levels intensely to ensure absolute best practice. In addition, all safeguarding referrals are monitored by the assistant director. Excellent training is provided, the impact of which can be seen in the exemplary practice adopted by staff and their secure knowledge and confidence.

The centre is truly established at the heart of the extremely diverse community it serves and the wide range of different groups get on well together overall. This is due to the concerted effort by all staff, partners and many families to promote community cohesion and tackle any tensions. They have worked hard to break down barriers to access and have devised

creative ways of succeeding, for example, the weekly Eastern European social evenings and the multicultural community events which bring families from different cultures together to share their traditions. The centre identifies the many languages and dialects spoken by families in the reach area from the registration forms and local intelligence. Multi-lingual staff and links with community members and partners ensure effective communications with these families. The centre promotes inclusive practice well, especially for disabled children and those with special educational needs.

Exemplary partnerships with other agencies ensure that families have access to a wide range of services delivered by professionals who have an in-depth understanding of their needs. They share resources very well and avoid duplication of services through extremely effective communication. The majority of families are engaged in centre services and the gap between families from key target groups and the rest is narrowing. In a recent survey, users rated the centre on average a score of 8.5 out of ten resulting in the very large majority of users being satisfied with the centre and services. As a result, the centre provides good 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	2
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.	2

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

The findings from the most recent inspections of the centre's linked Early Years provision and local primary schools were used to inform the judgements made during the inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Mortimer House Children's Centre on 6 and 7 February 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. Like you, we found your centre to be welcoming and friendly.

Your children's safety and welfare are paramount and safeguarding practices and procedures are exemplary. Staff are swift to intervene early with any concerns to ensure that children are safe and families are fully supported. Some of you told us that you receive excellent care, guidance and support, particularly when facing times of crisis. Others said they had formed much-needed friendships and received support from other parents.

Caring and dedicated staff are knowledgeable about your community and the families they serve. They are enthusiastic and committed to improving the outcomes for your families. They have worked hard to establish the centre at the heart of the diverse community it serves. The centre has also successfully brought together families from different minority ethnic groups and has developed your understanding of one another's cultural and religious traditions and beliefs. Staff also work very well with other professionals to ensure that your families get the right support when you need it. Your centre also gathers and listens to your views about what your families need most. As a result, services and activities are matched to your needs and are successfully encouraging many of you to use them. This ensures that your centre provides good value for money.

Your centre has helped you and your families become healthier and a good number of mothers are breastfeeding their babies. Children's dental health is improving and the number of children who are obese at Reception Year at school has reduced to below the national average. Staff have also helped make sure you are safer in your homes. You are accessing the good financial support and advice available and many of you are better off as a result. A good proportion of you are accessing volunteering opportunities, adult learning and training opportunities and employment support. However the centre is not routinely

provided with information about your progress and achievements and has been asked to improve this.

Your children are supported by highly skilled staff to make outstanding progress in their learning and development. They also successfully engage you in your child's play and learning both at centre activities and at home. Parenting skills and relationships with your children have significantly developed. As a result, schools report that children who have accessed the children's centre are confident, creative and imaginative and are well-prepared for school. They also report that parents are interested in working in partnership with the school to support their child's learning and development.

Your centre has a good capacity to improve. We have asked the centre to reach even more families living in your community in order to continue to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged and the rest. Everyone involved in your centre has high expectations and is passionate about improving the outcomes for your families.

We wish you all the very best for the future.

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