

# Inspection report for Maypole Children's Centre

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Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	404537
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Centre leader	Daniel Dearnley
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY315014 Rainbow Childcare EY382588 Little Stars Nursery EY408909 Alpha and Omega at Gawthorpe Community Primary School

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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 families using the centre, the head of centre and centre manager, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority, partnership agencies and the advisory board.

They observed the centre's work, including visits to a family and an outreach session in the community. They looked at a range of relevant documentation including minutes of meetings, case studies, users' evaluations, the centre's self-evaluation form, business plans and data reports.

## Information about the centre

Maypole Children's Centre's reach area mainly covers the Ossett area in the North West District of Wakefield Metropolitan District Council. The centre is based in Gawthorpe, a former mining community, to the northern end of the area. The centre's premises are co-located with Gawthorpe Community Academy, which is a national support school. Its governing body has been commissioned to deliver the centre on behalf of the local authority. The principal of the academy is the Head of Centre and manages the Children's Centre Manager, who has responsibility for the day-to-day management of the centre. The centre has a small team of staff, which has experienced a number of changes over the last year.

This phase two centre, which opened in 2008, delivers a range of services to meet the core purpose. Play and learning sessions, targeted speech and language support, family learning courses, community events and individual support for families are delivered by the centre's staff at the centre, in other local venues across the reach area and in families' homes. In addition, health professional and other agencies provide services directly from the centre.

The number of children under five-years-of-age in the reach area, currently 1,209, is increasing. Although across the reach area as a whole unemployment levels are low and take up of out-of-work benefits is less than in other parts of the country, the area immediately around the centre is one of the 30% most deprived nationally. Pockets of disadvantage also exist in other parts of the reach area. There are few lone parents and most families are of White British heritage.

When children enter early years provision, their skills, knowledge and abilities vary across the reach area but are generally similar to or below those typical for their age. In addition to Gawthorpe Community Academy, there are seven other primary and infant schools in the reach area. Most children start school when they are three-years-old. The centre has two designated childcare providers, Little Stars Day Nursery and Rainbows Childcare. There is also out of school provision at the neighbouring academy. The three childcare providers have been inspected recently and their inspection reports can be viewed at: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## 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

'Fantastic in every way.', 'Ten out of ten.' and 'We just need more of them.' are common phrases used by parents and professionals that demonstrate the high regard the local community has for the work of Maypole Children's Centre and its staff team.

This centre has quickly established itself at heart of the community and is an accessible and much needed resource when help is needed. The outstanding care, guidance and support provided by a knowledgeable and caring staff team are empowering families to deal with any crises in an effective and productive way. Parents are confident to access services when they need them most, even if they have not used the centre for a while, as they are guaranteed a warm welcome and do not feel judged. Relationships with users, including families from all target groups, are highly developed as their views are sought regularly, highly valued and acted upon whenever possible. This enables services to be closely

matched to users' needs and, as a result, outcomes for children and families are good overall and some are outstanding.

Most centre users access courses that improve their parenting skills, increase their understanding of children's learning and develop their own abilities. Retention and success rates are high and the majority of learners progress to become volunteers, access further education or gain employment. These achievements improve emotional and economic well-being and aspirations across the community are rising. Partner agencies highlight the impact the centre has had on changing the culture of the local community by increasing the self-esteem and reducing dependency on out-of-work benefits.

Parents make a very positive contribution to the work and development of the centre, through detailed feedback on services and activities, frequently held consultation events for the wider community and representation on the advisory board. Users' skills, talents and ideas are used creatively to support the centre's work. The centre promotes additional involvement in the community extremely well. It has been instrumental in helping to maintain local traditions, such as the 'Maypole Event', and improving local relationships with the police.

Children and adults have fun playing together as activities are well planned and excellent use is made of the centre's richly resourced indoor environment and outdoor play area to stimulate learning. Good safeguarding arrangements ensure that children are well protected in times of crisis. All parents say they feel safe at the centre because the premises are very clean, good security systems are in place and they are confident to share any safeguarding concerns with staff. A range of effective strategies help to promote physical, emotional and mental health.

An exceptionally wide range of partnership links ensures services are well integrated, swiftly responsive to local needs and avoid duplication. Drop-in sessions offering specialist advice and guidance are popular and well used. These, together with outreach activities and family-focused fun events at venues across the area, ensure services are readily accessible to all families in the reach area. The absence of live birth data from the health service has led to the centre devising increasingly innovative methods to contact all families with young children living in the area but this remains a constant challenge that is pursued relentlessly.

The governing body provides a clear strategic lead for centre leaders and reviews performance regularly. The centre benefits from recent increases in monitoring and challenge from the local authority, although the local authority recognises there are still improvements to be made to the data provided to the centre. The centre has good capacity to sustain improvement. Leaders are passionate about making a positive difference for local children and families and have ambitious strategies in place for the centre's continuous development. The manager's tenacity, knowledge of the area and ability to form effective partnerships has a profound effect on the well-being of families, particularly those who need additional support in their lives. The centre gathers a wealth of evidence to demonstrate the impact of its work across most outcome areas, but has not consolidated this fully to provide succinct overviews to aid really sharp, critical analysis and rigorous self-challenge. This has

resulted in a variety of targets, all of which are pertinent and some of which are specific and measurable, but this current approach does not facilitate robust assessment of the centre's performance over time. Nevertheless, centre leaders' astute evaluation of services ensures its limited resources are very efficiently targeted to supporting those most in need and this greatly improves outcomes for those accessing the centre.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- For the local authority to:
  - work with the health service to ensure details of live births are routinely shared with the centre in a timely manner
  - increase the detail of data available to the centre, particularly the baseline data for target groups to strengthen self-evaluation.
  
- Sharpen the centre's own evaluation of its work by:
  - consolidating the wealth of information gathered to provide succinct overviews of the centre's impact
  - focusing on one set of specific, measurable targets against which to assess the centre's performance over a period of time.

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

<b>2</b>
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The centre has a positive impact on the health and well-being of local families. Parents report that 'Baby Massage' sessions help them to bond with their babies and have resulted in additional benefits, such as reduced colic. 'Fussy Eaters' and cooking courses encourage the introduction of different tastes and low cost nutritious meals, with one family reducing their food bill by over 30% as a result. The 'Baby Moves' session, regular outdoor play and use of the local parks promotes physical exercise well. Obesity levels for children at the end of Reception Year are lower than local and national averages. Parents who choose to breastfeed are well supported so that the percentage of babies who are breastfed at six to eight weeks has increased to around 40%, but this is still below the national average of 46%. Although the centre promotes smoking cessation and smoke free homes, there are no data to demonstrate the success of these initiatives.

Home safety assessments, regular first aid courses and safety focused events delivered with the police and fire service make a marked contribution to raising users' awareness of how to keep their children safe. As a result of the 'Hazard House' activity in a play and learning session, parents each identified at least two areas for improvement to reduce risks in their own home. Families who access parenting courses learn how to manage their children's behaviour more confidently and build positive family relationships.

The centre makes a discernible difference in ensuring outcomes are good for the majority of children who are subject to a child-protection plan by very effective multi-agency working. Sharing of information between partners is good, particularly for families engaged in the

Common Assessment Framework process. Monitoring and support is notably good for families who are on the threshold of a referral to social services. The centre's swift engagement of these families reduces the number of children who become 'children in need' or require longer-term care.

Everyone gets on well together as there are clear rules and boundaries in place, developed in consultation with users. Parents demonstrate a strong commitment to the centre and are keen to repay the benefits they have gained from the centre. For example, young parents volunteer to encourage other young parents to use the centre and a buddying scheme has recently started to support families who feel apprehensive about coming to the centre for the first time. The centre employs users' skills and abilities very effectively. They undertake administrative tasks and gardening projects and some parents act as role models for other parents in the play sessions and deliver taster sessions for users. These sessions have increased facilitators' confidence greatly and encouraged some to train as tutors and others to start their own businesses.

Children have a wide range of opportunities to express their views and make choices which enables them to become independent and inquisitive learners. Children in the 'Stay and Play' sessions choose pieces of fruit independently as they know that this helps them to be healthy. They are confident in developing good relationships with other children and adults. Those attending the FEET (Families Enjoying Everything Together) sessions play cooperatively together as they and their parents are prepared well for their transition to the school nursery. They show a keen awareness of how to keep themselves safe as they manage the risks of riding vehicles around the outdoor road track, avoiding collisions by taking turn with their friends.

A range of strategies have been deployed to support young children's speech and language skills such as development of the 'Every Child a Talker' programme and 'Chatter Matters' course. However, these targeted sessions, and transition arrangements at some schools, are comparatively new and their longer-term impact is not yet fully evident. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, results fluctuate from year-to-year and school-to-school, but overall show an increasing number of children reaching a good level of development and that the gap between those in the lowest 20% and the rest is less than the national average and continues to decrease gradually.

The centre provides excellent opportunities for families to improve their economic well-being. Users are very ably supported by the centre's very effective links with the community employment adviser to develop career paths into further education and gain skills which result in successful job applications. Former users share inspirational accounts of how their engagement with the centre had changed their lives and raised personal expectations. One parent explained that her involvement with the centre has, 'made me see that I don't have to be just a parent for the rest of my life, I want to make something of myself now I have the confidence to move forward'.

Excellent relationships with local charities provides access to vouchers for food hampers, furniture and clothing and ensures that when families are at their most vulnerable basic

provisions are available. Users are provided with a range of information on debt management, benefits advice and housing support which significantly improves their economic stability.

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>2</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>1</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>1</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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In the most disadvantaged part of the reach area, 100% of families are registered and the majority use the centre regularly. The centre is passionate about engaging with all families and has developed innovative strategies to improve registrations. Staff know the local area well and use local needs analyses effectively to plan services. The centre is very aware of the difficulties and challenges faced by families within its reach area, for example, those who feel isolated in the community, and those experiencing domestic violence. Good use is made of the excellent multi-agency links to identify those who may require additional support. Case studies and discussions with parents indicate that young parents, lone parents, families with a disabled member and fathers are well supported and are represented across all the centre's activities, often following individual help from the skilled parent-support workers.

Play and learning sessions are well-planned to promote purposeful play as they are based on insightful observations and knowledge of children's interests. Staff provide good role models in working with children, for example, by asking questions in ways which encourage children to talk about what they are doing and extend their vocabulary. Parents engage well with their children and are keen to enhance their children's learning at home using ideas gained in sessions and courses. The centre maintains excellent links with specialist health services, which ensure children who need additional support are identified quickly and, whenever possible, additional support is in place before they start school. Adults make outstanding progress from their starting points as courses and activities are carefully



designed to develop confidence, build on previous achievements and create career opportunities.

Expectant parents are very well prepared for the imminent birth of their baby through regular 'Parentcraft' classes hosted by the centre. Young adults benefit from the discrete contraceptive service offered through the centre. Advice provided by visiting health professionals in the 'First Time Parents' sessions gives parents confidence in deciding when to introduce solid foods, and increases their understanding of how to promote their children's oral health. Evaluations from the on-site counselling service indicate sensitive and very effective support is provided to help cope with bereavement, post-natal depression and mental health issues. Several parents said that they could not imagine what it would be like if they had not received help from the centre as this had encouraged them to leave the house and develop strong social works which now extend beyond the centre.

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>2</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>1</b>

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

**2**

Levels of accountability are clear and well understood. The centre leaders set high expectations, provide regular opportunities for professional development and inspire the staff team to develop creative solutions in engaging with and meeting the needs of local families. Users' evaluations, which indicate very high levels of satisfaction, and feedback from partner agencies are reviewed regularly by the advisory board to inform service provision and programme planning. Self-evaluation is thorough and demonstrates a detailed understanding of the centre's strengths and areas for development overall. However, the large amount of data, feedback and case studies that the centre collects to demonstrate the impact of its work is unwieldy and generates a range of different targets which makes assessing the centre's performance more difficult.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Strong policies and procedures ensure that staff and volunteers working at the centre are subject to rigorous checks and receive training relevant to their role. Detailed risk assessments help minimise risks throughout the premises, during activities and for outings and events. Parents' safety-related concerns are acted upon effectively. For example, parental worries about the speed of traffic outside the centre led to additional measures being introduced to ensure protection of children leaving the premises, police monitoring of traffic speed and carefully planned themed activities related to 'Transport and Journeys' to highlight road safety procedures.

The centre promotes equality and celebrates diversity well. Promotion of international charity appeals and involvement of users from minority ethnic groups in planning activities to celebrate their festivals enhances awareness of other cultures and traditions. Staff regularly attend events at local schools and nurseries to publicise the centre's services, and events are specifically organised during the evenings and weekends which make them accessible to the large number of working parents in the area. Good quality crèche facilities help prevent barriers to attending training and well-targeted support for two-year-olds is helping to enhance their skills so they make good progress when they start school.

The limited staff resources are deployed exceptionally well to widen participation and target services for the most vulnerable families. The centre's work is further enhanced by the large number of partner agencies who deliver services from the centre and there is a strong focus on preventing duplication of services. Young parents do not have a specific session as regular liaison with other agencies demonstrates that their needs are well met elsewhere and they access universal services at the centre with confidence. Loans of high quality toy sacks extend play resources across the reach area and for users at home. Centre staff participate frequently in events to share their knowledge and good practice and this is highly valued by their partners.

Childcare providers, including childminders, receive excellent support from the children's centre teacher which they report has significantly improved the quality of their practice, particularly in tracking children's progress and early identification of additional support needs. Consistent monitoring of services and external review of case files ensures that services are of consistently good quality, are meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families well and are swiftly amended in response to users' feedback. Consequently, outcomes for children and adults are good and some are outstanding and the centre offers excellent value for money.

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>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</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>1</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>1</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>1</b>

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

The recent inspection outcomes of the two designated childcare providers, Little Stars Day Nursery and Rainbows Childcare, were used to inform judgements in the inspection. Other reports were reviewed to provide contextual information.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Maypole Children's Centre on 13–14 February 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection as it helped us to make the judgements about how well the centre provides services for you and your families.

Many of you told us how fantastic the centre is and how it is making a real difference for you, especially when you are facing difficulties in your life. The centre is a place where you visit if you need help, even when you have not been for a while, as you know the centre staff will give you with a warm welcome, not judge you and provide outstanding care, guidance and support. You told us how valuable the support of the centre has been in helping you to develop your confidence and to make new friends who you now also meet with outside the centre.

The centre is constantly seeking new ways to make sure everyone knows about the centre's services and is able to use them easily. This is because the centre is not told when babies are born to be able to make contact. We have asked the local authority to work with the health service to make sure this information is given to the centre. We have also asked the local authority to improve the information it provides to the centre so it can understand better what difference it is making for different groups of users. However, the centre has developed a very good knowledge of the area it serves and is good at meeting your needs with the services and activities it offers.

The centre is excellent at supporting you to develop your own skills and abilities. Some of you told us how valuable the courses have been in building your confidence in managing your children's behaviour better, helping you to understand first aid procedures and gaining qualifications. You appreciate that there are crèches offered to help you attend these courses. The centre is also very good at helping you to get involved in the centre. It was good to talk to those of you who have joined the advisory board and feel that your views make a difference to how the centre develops its services. Many of you told us that you are keen to volunteer as you want to give something back to the centre for the help you have received. We can see that the centre benefits from this and we know you do too as some of you shared how your volunteering has helped you to build confidence to gain employment and start your own businesses. We were also pleased to hear how the centre has encouraged you to take part in local events such as the 'Maypole Parade' as this helps to continue local traditions.

The centre is good at supporting you to help your children learn and helping you to identify if your children need extra help. The FEET sessions are very useful in helping you and your children to get ready for them starting school. It was good to see how your children were developing their independence and managing to ride round the road track skilfully as they took turns and were careful not to bump into each other. You feel very safe at the centre and many of you commented on how clean and secure it was. Your good relationships with staff give you confidence to share any concerns with them and activities such as the 'Hazard House' in a 'Stay and Play' session helped you to identify where there might be risks in your home. This all helps to keep your children safe. There are lots of activities that help you to develop healthy lifestyles, such as cooking courses, baby massage sessions and breastfeeding support.

The centre is well led and managed. The centre manager has built very good links with a large number of other professionals so that staff know who can provide the best services for you rather than having to do everything themselves. The centre leaders are ambitious and are keen to make a difference. They want to make sure that the services are very well matched to your needs and so they are extremely good at asking for your feedback and checking whether the activities and courses are helping you to look after your children well. We think these are all good signs that the centre will be able to develop well in the future. However, the centre gathers a lot of information from you and does not always collect this together well to see just how much difference it is making overall. It sometimes sets too many targets so it cannot check how well it is doing over a period of time and we have asked the leaders to look at how they can improve this aspect of the centre's work.

Thank you to everyone who took time to come and speak with us or provided information for us. We are very grateful for your involvement in the inspection and wish you every success for the future.

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