

# Inspection report for Upton Children's Centre

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Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	420712
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Reporting inspector	Kathryn Gethin HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Tina Powell
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Upton Primary School URN: 130862
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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## 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 the head of centre, centre manager and staff, representatives from the local authority, members of the governing body, representatives from a wide range of partner agencies and parents. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Upton Children's Centre is a phase two centre that was designated in 2008. It is located in Upton, a former coal mining community. Levels of deprivation vary across the reach area. The centre is co-located with Upton Primary School and has links to four other primary schools. There are currently 895 children aged under five in the reach area. The reach area is amongst the 30% most deprived nationally. Some areas of Upton are within the 10% most deprived in the country. Worklessness in the area is high and 35% of children under four years live in households dependent on benefits. The vast majority of children are of White British heritage, with a small number of Eastern European families. Children's levels of skill on entry to early years provision are generally below age-related expectations.

The strategic management of the centre is operated on behalf of the local authority by the governing body of Upton Primary School, alongside a children's centre partnership board. The centre manager has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the centre and reports to the school headteacher. The centre provides an appropriate range of services to meet the core purpose. These include family support, health services, and parent and young child focused activities. Partner agencies include: health professionals; the speech and language team; family learning and support; adult education; and employment and training services.

## 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**

**3**

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

**3**

## Main findings

Upton Children's Centre is a satisfactory centre with some good features. The large majority of families are registered with the centre and the number of families living in the most disadvantaged areas accessing services is increasing. The centre provides a safe and welcoming environment, where parents can call at any time and their children can play in a large, well-resourced open area. Those using the centre speak highly of its importance in their lives. 'It has turned my life around' and 'I know I can trust them' are typical comments that reflect the confidence families have in the centre.

The safety and protection of children are at the heart of the centre's work. The centre gives a high priority to safeguarding and has robust systems in place to ensure the safety of families and children. Staff are very knowledgeable about the local authority safeguarding procedures and all training is up-to-date. Children who are identified as children in need or in the care of the local authority are well known to the centre and use its services regularly.

The centre has focused its provision based on targets set by the local authority and there has been a general trend of improvement. Not all priorities have clear or realistic targets and at times data are confusing. Tracking and monitoring systems are not well embedded, or at a point where managers can use them to measure the impact of their services, particularly in regard to the outcomes for health. As a result, the centre has a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families is good. Staff have a good understanding of families' individual circumstances and provide support tailored to each individual's needs. They recognise the difference between providing full support for those who are most vulnerable, particularly in times of crisis, and enabling others to grow in confidence and take on more responsibility.

A small number of parents sit on the partnership board and the parent forum offers a less formal setting for parents to become involved in developing services. Some parents have

successfully worked as volunteers within the centre. However, the support to enable them to volunteer within the local community is not as well established.

The centre offers good quality learning activities to children and their families. Children play with purpose in the popular 'Stay and Play' sessions and thriving childminders' group. A focus on improving children's readiness for school has had good results and the benefits are being seen throughout the school. The delivery of the 'Confidence Counts' course has been instrumental in enabling parents to make positive changes to their lives.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Improve provision for families by:
  - increasing the opportunities for families to engage in voluntary work in the local community.
- Improve evaluation by:
  - sharpening the targets in the development plan to ensure they are realistic, measurable and sufficiently challenging
  - embedding and refining the tracking, monitoring and quality assurance systems so that information is accurate and allows better self-evaluation.

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

<b>3</b>
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Health outcomes for families in the reach area, including those in most need of support, are at least satisfactory and beginning to improve. The proportion of mothers who remain breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks varies but is in line with the national average at 48%. The 'Little Angels' breastfeeding service provides support to mothers. On average, over a three-year period, obesity rates have remained in line with the national data. Healthy eating is promoted through the 'Cooking on a budget' course and by raising awareness in 'Stay and Play' sessions. Parents have welcomed the centre policy of adults and children sitting together to eat and say this has been a positive experience for their children. Immunisation levels are high at 94%. The weekly drop-in from the health trainer offers families support with healthy lifestyle changes including weight management, stopping smoking, increasing exercise and reducing stress and alcohol consumption. However, there are no tracking systems in place; therefore, the centre cannot show the full impact of its services.

Children's behaviour is impeccable and children are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. Parenting programmes and the 'Confidence Counts' programme are successfully raising parents' understanding of behaviour management techniques and an awareness of how to keep their children safe. One parent commented, 'I know it's a place where I can come and be listened to and be safe.' There is a strong commitment to preventative work. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well, the number of children on child protection plans has decreased and children in the care of the local authority frequently access activities at the centre.

Children make good progress from their starting points and the 'FEET' programme (Families Enjoying Everything Together) has had a positive impact on how well children are prepared for transition to school. Learning is very effectively tracked and recorded in well-documented learning journeys. In 2012, 90% of children that had attended activities at the centre entered Reception year at or above the expected level of development. The percentage of children who achieve a total of 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scales, with at least six points in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development has increased from 49% to 62%. The percentage gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile and the rest has narrowed significantly from 43% to 25%. Parents learn the importance of attachment in the popular baby massage classes and gain a better understanding of play and communication in the 'Stay and Play' and 'Story Sacks' sessions.

A few parents contribute to decision making at the centre through representation on the partnership board and the parent forum is beginning to have a voice within the centre. The centre frequently looks at ways to canvas families' opinions on the services offered. Some parents are engaged in training; others have developed their skills through voluntary work and subsequently moved into formal education. However, there is not a well-established programme for adults to experience voluntary work in the local community. This limits their ability to develop their skills and improve their economic stability and independence.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.</b>	<b>3</b>

## How good is the provision?

**2**

The centre has been highly successful in increasing the number of families registered with the centre to 79% and families from the most deprived areas of Upton are well represented within this figure. These include Polish families, disabled children and teenage parents. The centre has rightly identified the need to engage with more fathers. Assessment is used well to ensure services meet the needs of the large majority of families who are using the centre.

Home visits are carried out within eight weeks of registration and signposting families to the most relevant services are a strength of the centre. An innovative scheme, in partnership with the local Co-operative, has been introduced where families with a baby under 12 months are rewarded with a £5 voucher if they access services on five occasions within one year.

The centre promotes purposeful learning well and activities are of a good quality. Some courses, such as 'Baby massage' and 'FEET' are popular and very well attended. Good attendance levels and participation rates on courses confirm that services offered meet the needs of most families who attend. Families are full of praise for the support given to them. 'They never say no, there is always a solution' typifies the appreciation families have for staff. For many, the centre is the first place where families feel they have not been judged. Staff have high expectations and achievements are celebrated with certificates and displays.

The centre provides good care, guidance and support for families. Families are confident to ask for help and are appreciative when staff accompany them to appointments. In times of crisis, the centre provides immediate support, for example, by making immediate contact to other agencies such as 'Safe @ Home' for those affected by domestic abuse. This ensures families are safeguarded. A raft of information on health issues, accessing support, benefits and seeking work is widely available within the centre. Parents say how they have grown in confidence and continue to build on their achievements. The quality of childcare in the locality is of a good standard.

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>2</b>

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

**2**

Governance and accountability arrangements are in place and understood. The strategic direction of the centre is clear but several management changes within the local authority have hindered the centre's ability to drive improvement at a faster pace. The day-to-day management of the centre is undertaken by an experienced centre manager. Staff are highly committed, work well together and feel supported. The centre is rightly focused on addressing the areas where there is most need.

Self-evaluation is broadly accurate. However, not all targets in the development plan are realistic, measurable or sufficiently challenging and the accuracy and sharing of data are still not fully effective. As a result, the centre offers satisfactory value for money as systems to

track progress over time are not as well embedded. The centre's environment is of a high quality and the site manager takes pride in ensuring the building is safe and welcoming. Accommodation is used efficiently, with agreements in place between the school and centre on the use of shared areas.

The inclusion of children and their families is central to the centre's vision. Early identification and intervention have ensured specialist provision is in place for disabled children and those with special educational needs. Families with English as an additional language say how the centre has helped them make friends and improved their understanding of spoken English.

Effective safeguarding policies and procedures are in place to safeguard children and families. Staff attend regular training in child protection and robust vetting procedures are in place. Case files are of a very high standard with clear and detailed recording. All staff and partners are fully aware of safeguarding issues. Parents have a clear understanding of their role in protecting children.

Partnerships with schools and health and social care teams are good. Childminders have a regular group session at the centre and have benefited from the good advice and support given by the children's centre teacher. Partners are regularly invited to join weekly sessions at the centre as guest speakers and include topics such as healthy eating within the 'Stay and Play' sessions. The centre regularly asks families for their views on the centre. Most parents are more than satisfied with the services offered and say that the centre and staff 'are amazing'.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose</b>	<b>2</b>



<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision.</b>	<b>2</b>
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## **Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

Inspectors considered the previous inspection report for Upton Primary School. The school was last inspected on 30 November 2010 and the report is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Upton Children's Centre on 28 February 2013. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

We would like to thank those of you who helped with our work. You expressed your views clearly and they were helpful to us. We visited some activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you. We found that the centre is a safe and welcoming environment where you feel confident to call in at any time to talk to staff and other parents. Safeguarding children is a priority of the centre.

Managers and staff are focused on priorities within the area and performance has improved. However, not all targets are realistic or easily measured and we have asked the centre to look at this. We have also asked the centre to consider how it can access more information, especially when you have completed training and activities, to ensure it has been a worthwhile experience for you and has continued to make a difference in improving your lives. You may be able to assist the centre with this.

The centre is good at encouraging more of you to visit and provides you with a wide range of activities. The centre is focused on helping you to build up your confidence and encouraging you to develop a range of skills. We were delighted to meet you in the 'Confidence Counts' course, where you appeared to be having great fun with the activities. Your assistance in helping with our creative attempts was very much appreciated. We were pleased to hear how some of you represent parental views through the parent forum. We hope this continues to grow.

You are developing your parenting skills and as a result, you are enabling your children to feel secure and make the best progress they can. Your children receive good quality learning

experiences when they visit the centre and it was a delight to observe them having fun as they learnt to take turns and share with one another.

The centre has a commitment to involving you in voluntary work. We have asked the staff to look at how more of you can take advantage of these opportunities, both in the centre and in the local community. We hope that if the opportunity arises, you will take up the offer.

The care, guidance and support offered by staff and other agencies they work with are a real strength of the centre. Staff are dedicated and committed to improve outcomes for you and your families. You told us you found that support extremely helpful, particularly when you are experiencing difficult times.

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