

# Inspection report for Harrogate Bilton Children's Centre

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Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	406947
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Woodfield Primary School URN 121469
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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 or had discussions with managers and staff from the centre and the local authority, members of the steering group and a number of partner agencies including: health, Jobcentre Plus, youth services, adult learning providers and one local headteacher. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Harrogate Bilton Children's Centre was designated as a phase two children's centre in January 2008. It meets the core purpose for children's centres and is directly operated by North Yorkshire County Council. The staff team comprises one full-time manager, two and a third full-time equivalent parent support advisers, one full time receptionist, one half-time administrative assistant, one eight hour senior early years worker and one 25 hour early years worker. As a team, and supported by local authority and other partners, they are responsible for service delivery across the area served by the centre. The centre is accommodated in converted accommodation in Woodfield Primary School. There are seven other primary schools in the reach area; all of them are within walking distance of the children's centre. A weekly health session is offered in the library in Harrogate town centre.

Until April 2011 the centre was managed with three other centres by one manager and the staff team was shared across the four centres. Following a local authority review of children's centres the centre now has its own designated manager and staff team. The area served by the centre is to the north of Harrogate town centre. The centre is located in the middle of a large housing development.

Some parts of the reach area are described as affluent, while levels of deprivation in parts of the reach area are high and in some pockets of the reach area up to around 68% of children

are described as living in poverty. There are currently 1275 children aged under five years living in the reach area and around 88% of these are registered with the centre. Worklessness is high and only approximately 20% of adults in the immediate area surrounding the centre have some form of recognised qualification at level 3 or above. Most of the population is of White British heritage. Since 2007 there has been an increase in the number of families from Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia living in the area served by the centre. Children's levels of skill on entry to early years provision in school 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
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2
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## Main findings

Since April 2011 Bilton Children's Centre has benefited from having a manager and staff team designated solely to the reach area. The dedication and drive of the manager and staff have brought about an extremely well-matched range of services and activities providing centre users with high quality care, guidance and support. Over 88% of families in the reach area are registered with the centre and the majority of families in the area use or receive at least one of the centre's services. This is higher in the area where the proportion of families are living on low incomes or are dependent on workless benefits is greater. Additionally, a high proportion of the groups identified as those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable or hard to reach participate in the activities on offer.

Clear risk assessments help to ensure that families are, and feel safe, when they use the centre. Robust recruitment and vetting procedures are in place and used effectively to help to protect those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Staff have a thorough understanding of the centre's safeguarding policy and referral procedures. They work especially well with health and social care partners and have a secure knowledge of the thresholds they work with, for example, for referral to social care.

Families thoroughly enjoy the activities offered for them to have fun and learn together. Adults particularly appreciate healthy cooking activities for adults and children, such as pizza making, and are keen to put what they have learned to good use at home. Parents in need of extra support develop their parenting skills very well. They are very well supported by

highly skilled and knowledgeable staff in a wide range of ways, from establishing routines with children, to being provided with duvets to keep their children warm. In many cases families report that the support makes a life changing difference to them. Parents are well-supported to help them to improve their economic and social well-being, for example, through volunteering or learning activities. However, the centre does not receive enough information from partners about the progress parents make after they have been signposted to other services for support in their learning to be clear about how successful the signposting has been.

The centre has good capacity to sustain improvement. Self-assessment in the centre is accurate and provides a clear focus for the centre's work. Governance arrangements are robust. The local authority and the well-established steering group both challenge the centre's performance against its targets, maintaining both a strategic and local focus for the centre.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- improve the arrangements with partner agencies, such as adult learning providers, to ensure that the centre receives information about the progression that adults make in their learning and when they seek employment.

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

2
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Access to good quality early years provision supports children in the reach to make good progress in their learning and development. Data shows that since 2010 there has been a 9.7% increase to 64.3% in 2012 in the number of children with a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. In addition, although the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers has fluctuated, the trend overall is that the gap is narrowing and in 2012 it was 31.9%.

Families respond positively to learning opportunities on offer to them. They actively engage with activities and parents' understanding of how their children learn and develop is increasing. Children behave well and quickly learn what the expectations of them are. In the first session of a parent and child physical activity children soon knew what to do when the whistle blew; very young children waited to hear what the next activity was and older children had so much fun balancing and catching they asked, 'what are we doing next' as they heard the whistle. Many parents learn from the activities at the centre and show positive progress, including moving into volunteering roles and employment or accessing training that improves their employability prospects. They are also well supported by the centre and partners to improve their economic stability, and in the last year families in the reach have been supported to access over £20,000 in benefits that they were not claiming. Parents are also resourceful in how they use what they have learned, for example, one

parent made banana cakes using a recipe from a cookery course to give as Christmas presents to keep her spending within her budget.

Clear risk assessments and good safety arrangements are in place for activities at the centre and in outreach venues. The centre is effective in ensuring families' safety, and families say that they feel safe in the centre. Families who are having one to one support routinely have a home safety check and messages about child safety are a regular feature in centre activities. In cookery sessions, for example, parents are given advice about how to manage using a hot oven when children are cooking with them. As a result, parents are developing a good understanding about how to keep their child safe. Parents have a great deal of confidence in the centre's staff team and confidently ask them for support and advice when, as is increasingly happening, they recognise themselves that they need it. Parent support advisers very carefully match support to individual needs, particularly for those with a child protection plan, those subject to Common Assessment Framework processes and looked after children.

The centre has a strong commitment to improving health outcomes for families in the reach area. The wide variety of healthy lifestyle activities on offer are embraced by families who, for example, enjoy using healthy recipes at home and taking part in running sessions. As a result, health indicators are improving very well. The number of children considered to be obese when they reach the end of Reception year in school has reduced from 20% in 2008/2009 to 6.8% in 2011/2012. The number of mothers who continue to breastfeed their baby six- to- eight weeks after delivery is another improving picture increasing from 46% to 53% over the last three years. In addition, take up at the breastfeeding support group has seen a rapid increase since it was aligned with the midwife clinic in the centre. Mothers using the service describe the group as, 'invaluable', 'amazing' and 'great for my needs'.

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>2</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>2</b>

**How good is the provision?**

**1**

The centre manager has an extremely good knowledge of the centre's reach area profile. Staff are highly aware of the challenges faced by families living in the different parts of the reach through their regular contact with families at outreach venues, such as schools and childcare providers. Assessment is used excellently to ascertain the needs of families within the community and to ensure that the individual needs of families are met. Heavy involvement in the Woodfield Neighbourhood Project is an good example of how the centre uses information specifically about one of the centre's priority localities to plan and prioritise its services, for example, by providing activities to help improve adults' attitudes to diet and exercise. Service delivery does not stand still in the centre. Data and information from partners is analysed carefully and regularly so that the centre has a clear view of which groups of families are using the centre's services and the impact on outcomes for families. Where the need for change is identified it is done in close consultation with service users to ensure that the activity will continue to meet their needs while evolving to meet the needs of others. The Polish group, for example, has been through a period of change and from April there will be a talk time group for all families who speak English as an additional language. There is a high level of engagement from families in the centre's target groups, such as young parents, eastern European families and disabled children and parents and those children who have special educational needs.

Highly appropriate learning and development opportunities are woven into all of the centre's activities. When health visitors identified that there was a higher-than-average incidence of dental caries in children living in the reach, the centre's prompt response was to invite a dental hygienist to universal activity sessions. In this way parents received helpful and relevant information in a non-threatening environment. Adults who have learning and development opportunities through the centre have their progress and success tracked and celebrated. However, for parents who are signposted to external providers this is not done as well because the centre does not receive relevant information from partners.

The quality of work done with families on an individual level is exceptional, especially when there are complex needs in a family, for example, sustained and well-coordinated work with a range of agencies including: the local authority special educational needs coordinator, domestic abuse support, relationship counselling, housing services and an advice service in one case. Staff are meticulous in their assessment of families' needs to ensure that support and guidance is relevant and devised to help families to become stronger and not become dependent on 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>1</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?

The local authority provides robust and regular monitoring of the centre's performance and financial management through the manager's supervision and meetings with finance and premises officers. There are clear and well understood management structures in place. Staff receive regular and supportive supervision from a highly effective manager to help them in their work and their professional development. The steering group is well-established and attendance at meetings is prioritised by its members who are drawn from a good range of statutory and voluntary partners and parents. The steering group is used well to review the centre's effectiveness and challenge the manager about performance against targets. They actively take part in reviewing the centre's self-evaluation by analysing the self-evaluation form against the Ofsted grade criteria to bring a wider perspective to the process.

The centre's development plan is drawn up taking into account a wide range of thoroughly assessed information. It focuses on what the needs of families in the reach area are, while still providing universal access services such as stay and play sessions. Working with existing providers and schools to provide outreach services is a well-established feature of the centre's work, as is its work with partner agencies to ensure duplication of work is eliminated. Together with good outcomes for families this indicates the centre provides good value for money.

Information sharing protocols are good. Staff regularly work with families who have complex needs and either currently or in the past have had multiple agencies working with them, including children's social care. Centre staff attend weekly screening and outcomes meetings that are a good method of ensuring that the most appropriate agency is working with a family and positive progress is being made. Staff are skilled at recognising where there is potential that children's welfare and development might be adversely affected. They have clear routes for referral that they use without hesitation because they recognise that the early support for a family can prevent a situation escalating. Safeguarding requirements are fully met. Staff are very well trained and have a good understanding of their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children's welfare. Parents are also well informed about the centre's expectations and respect rules such as those of not using mobile telephones in sessions. Recruitment and vetting procedures are robust and follow the local authority requirements and recommended good practice.

The centre actively engages in inclusive practice for all activities, this is one of the reasons changes have been made to the delivery of the Polish group. Disabled children and parents and those children who have special educational needs are very well supported by the centre and its partners to access services. The centre cannot deliver a full range of groups from its accommodation or with its small staff team, therefore, families who have to go to activities outside the reach area are supported with transport. Crèche facilities and provision on Saturdays and in the evening also enables a wider range of families to use services.



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>2</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>

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

None.

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## **Summary for centre users**

We inspected the Harrogate Bilton Children's Centre on 5 and 6 March 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 activities you have used, to help us to make our inspection judgements.

When we visited the centre we found that since April 2011 Bilton Children's Centre has had a manager and staff team designated solely to the reach area, which has been good for the centre. We saw that the manager and staff are dedicated to their work and they have worked hard to create an extremely well-matched range of services and activities to provide you with high quality care, guidance and support. Over 88% of families in your area are registered with the centre and the majority of families in the area use at least one of the centre's services. This is higher in the parts of the area where more families have lower

incomes or rely on workless benefits. We were also pleased to find that a high percentage of the groups identified as those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable or hard to reach take part in activities at the centre.

The centre has clear risk assessments which help to ensure that you are safe, and that you feel safe when you use the centre. The centre follows good and thorough procedures when they take on new staff and volunteers to make sure that they are suitable to work with you and your families. We found that staff have a thorough understanding of the centre's safeguarding policy and referral procedures so that they know what to do if they have a concern about a child. We saw that they work especially well with health and social care partners.

We know that you and your families thoroughly enjoy the activities provided for you to have fun and learn together. We were pleased to find that you particularly appreciate healthy cooking activities for you and your children, such as pizza making, and that you are keen to put what you have learned to good use at home. We found that those of you who might need extra support to develop your parenting skills do very well when you have support from the centre. You are very well supported by highly skilled and knowledgeable staff in lots of ways, from establishing routines with your children, to being provided with duvets to keep your children warm. Many of you say that the support you receive makes life changing differences to you. We found that you are well-supported to help you to improve your economic and social well-being, for example, there are opportunities for you to volunteer or join in different types of learning activity. However, we found that the centre does not receive enough information from its partners, such as adult learning providers, about how well you do after the centre has signposted you to them. We have asked the centre to get better at doing this.

We believe that the centre has a good capacity to keep on improving how it works with you and your families. The centre has a good understanding of what it does well and what it could do better and this is what helps it to focus its work on what is most needed for you and your families. The local authority and the well-established steering group both challenge the centre about how well it is doing against the targets it has set for its development. This means that there is always a local focus alongside the centre meeting what the local authority's needs are.

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