

Inspection report for Brotherton Children's Centre

Local authority	North Yorkshire
Inspection number	404499
Inspection dates	13–14 March 2013
Reporting inspector	Joanne Smith HMI

Centre leader	Cheryl Ainley-Dawson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	121384 Brotherton and Byram Community Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY371504 Playcare Day Nursery

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 centre manager and staff, parents, representatives from the local authority, partner agencies and two local headteachers.

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

Information about the centre

Brotherton Children's Centre was formerly part of the Sure Start Local Programme. It was designated as a phase one children's centre in March 2006. The centre provides the full core purpose for children's centres and is directly operated by North Yorkshire County Council. The centre forms part of the Selby/Ryedale area's integrated services early intervention strategy team. The centre's reach area is at the southern-most point of North Yorkshire County Council's administrative area and borders Leeds, Wakefield, Doncaster and Goole local authorities. Families living in the reach area access health services in several hospital trusts including Leeds, Doncaster, Wakefield and Goole. The centre serves an area that is described as semi-rural, covering several villages across a large geographical spread. Three major roads, the M62, the A1 (M) and the A19, all run through the reach area at different points.

Levels of deprivation in the centre's reach area are low, with 10 areas in the 70% least-deprived category nationally and one in the 30% most-deprived category nationally. This increases to five in the 30% most-deprived areas when the centre is measured against North Yorkshire County Council's deprivation index. There are currently 1,005 children aged under 5 years living in the reach area and 66% of these are registered with the centre. Unemployment is low and 70 children in the reach area live in households dependent on workless benefits. The population is predominantly of White British heritage. Overall,

children's skills and knowledge on entry to early years provision in school are below those generally expected for their age.

The centre accommodation is purpose-built and adjacent to the grounds of Brotherton and Byram Community Primary School. There are 12 other primary schools in the centre's reach area. There is a privately owned day-care setting on the premises, Playcare Nursery. The inspection reports for the school and day-care provider can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk. Whitley and Eggborough Children's Centre is a satellite to Brotherton Children's Centre. The staff team consists of: one manager, two parent support advisers, one full-time and two part-time early years workers, one administrator and one full-time and one part-time administrative assistants. Staff are shared across the two centres to deliver services with partner agencies. The centre manager has been in post since March 2007. The present staff team has been established since April 2012 following a restructure of children's centres in the local authority.

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

Brotherton Children's Centre, and its satellite Whitley and Eggborough Children's Centre, meet the diverse needs of children and families within the reach area well. Both buildings are welcoming and the satellite is a good reflection of the main centre, providing parents and children with a familiar environment. Risk assessments are routinely conducted on rooms and activities and contribute to providing an environment in which families are safe and feel secure. Robust and effective vetting and safeguarding systems are in place to protect families whose circumstances may make them vulnerable. Staff work especially well with social care colleagues, the early intervention team and local health workers to protect children who may be at risk. Referral pathways are clear and very well understood by centre staff. Case records are well maintained and clear.

The local authority provides regular monitoring and challenge to the centre with a clear focus on the centre's progress towards targets included in the development plan. The

manager has a very clear overview of the complex needs of the reach area. This is in spite of limited data being available for some parts of the area due to the location of the centre on the border of four other local authorities and hospital trusts. The manager successfully simplified the centre's complex development plan to focus on a small number of highly relevant targets for the area. There is a good understanding of the centre's strengths and where it could improve. As a result, the centre has a good capacity to sustain improvement in its service delivery to support further improvement for families. In response to an area-wide issue for a cluster of children's centres, one steering group has been developed by senior managers. There is a clear commitment to making sure that the views, needs and challenges from Brotherton Children's Centre are represented at the steering group, but the mechanism for this to happen is still evolving.

Families who use the centre's services enjoy them and make good progress. Parents thoroughly enjoy the activities offered that give them opportunities to be creative, play and have fun together with their children. Parents actively use the wide range of support and development opportunities provided to improve their economic and social well-being. They also successfully improve their parenting skills, especially when they have attended one of the focused parenting courses offered by the centre. However, the centre receives little information from some partners, such as adult learning providers and Jobcentre Plus, when they have signposted families to these services. Consequently, the centre often does not know what the outcome of their work with these families is.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Make certain that the views, needs and challenges from Brotherton Children's Centre families are clearly represented at the steering group.
- Improve systems to monitor progress and outcomes for families when they have been signposted to other agencies, such as adult learning providers or Jobcentre Plus for services.
- Ensure the local authority works more closely with neighbouring local authorities and health trusts to secure data for families living in the reach area but accessing services in, or linked to, other areas.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families respond very positively to the centre's concerted efforts to improve the health and well-being of their families. Together they enjoy making healthy meals and snacks, and take part in walks, singing and exercise activities. Parents say they use the ideas they are given in the centre at home with their children. This has a very positive impact on encouraging children and parents to develop healthier lifestyles. Data available to the centre indicate that at 4.8% the number of children who are classed as obese at the end of Reception Year in school is well below the national level. Parents actively request home safety assessments as

they develop a good understanding of their responsibility as parents to keep their children safe and well. There is also a very high take-up of childhood immunisations in the area, indicating that a large proportion of parents are engaging well with available universal health services.

The centre is a safe and welcoming environment for families. Parents are happy and comfortable to share their concerns with staff; confident they will be helped and supported. One parent described the centre as being, 'like a support network'. Parents say that through attending activities and courses at the centre they are learning more about their children's needs and how to support their development, for example when weaning a baby or toilet training a child. This helps them to manage children's behaviour and establish routines, which in turn is reducing pressure in the home. Work with children subject to the Common Assessment Framework processes, child in need or child protection plans, and children in the care of the local authority is carefully managed and ensures regular communication. This has a very positive impact on keeping vulnerable children safe.

Children in the area make good progress in their learning and development. They have access to childcare that is mostly good or better. The number of children who reached a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has risen from 55% in 2010 to over 64% in 2012. In addition to this a concentrated effort on the part of the centre and the local authority early years team has seen the achievement gap between the lowest- achieving 20% of children and their peers narrow by 8% in the last year to 20%.

Parents regularly contribute their views and help support the development of the centre. This enables parents to tell the staff what they like about the centre, what the issues are for families in the area and how they think the centre might be improved. This is having a positive impact on how services are developed in response to the local community's needs.

Families are well supported to improve their economic stability. They receive guidance to review their income and access extra benefits; in some cases this has meant over £4000 more in the annual household budget. Adults also have a good range of learning and training opportunities, which in some cases has brought about employment, volunteering activities and, in one case, a parent achieving a foundation degree. The centre does not, however, have a clear picture of the destinations of all the adults they have signposted to partners, such as adult learning providers or Jobcentre Plus, because there is little feedback sought or offered.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2

The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships, and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	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

Assessment is used very well to identify the needs of families in the area and to plan and provide good quality, relevant activities and services. The success of the centre's service planning is reflected in one parent's views, 'The centre is fantastic. My kids love it here and they always want to come over'. The number of families registered with the centre has increased to 66%, which is higher than the target set for the centre at the beginning of its reporting year. In addition, 65% of families engage with the centre in some way and much of this is sustained engagement, not single visits. The geography of the reach means that some families use neighbouring children's centres; when these data are taken into account over 85% of families in the reach area access a North Yorkshire children's centre service.

The centre has successfully engaged with groups whose circumstances make them harder to reach, including fathers, young parents and families from two sites where Traveller families live. The centre is flexible in its service delivery and staff have adapted how they work to take into account cultural differences and needs. Fathers particularly enjoy the Wednesday tea group which gives them the opportunity to cook a snack and play with their children.

Outreach work is based on the staff's very good knowledge of the families they are working with. Careful and considered assessment of families' needs results in individualised and relevant packages of support. However, families do not have to be working on a one-to-one programme to receive support and guidance. The centre's flexible approach means that within groups topics raised by parents can be included in the planning. For example, parents at the baby group asked about weaning and this was included in the following week's programme.

The centre has a good approach to engaging parents in learning. They offer a wide range of family learning, such as story sack making which involves parents and children participating together. There is a progression route for adults, for example, moving onto functional English and mathematics courses that lead to recognised qualifications. One parent spoken to during the inspection spoke of her desire to improve her literacy and numeracy skills to support her children and was determined to complete the courses even when she found

some of the tasks daunting. This is a good example of the centre's positive influence on families' attitudes and its ability to raise parents' aspirations to succeed.

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Clear and well-understood management procedures are in place at the centre. Individual supervision for all staff is regular and recognised as a professional development process. Case files are reviewed routinely as part of staff supervision to ensure accurate and timely recording and action. In addition, they are also subject to regular audits by the integrated services manager. This ensure monitoring procedures are robust and the centre's leaders are routinely informed of all centre activities and its work with local families.

The shared steering group was devised because individual centres in the Selby district were experiencing difficulties in getting representatives from partner agencies to commit to attending five separate steering groups. The joint steering group has successfully resolved this issue. There is a very strong commitment from the steering group to ensure that the parents' voice is still a prominent feature in steering group meetings. This was evident in the agenda and minutes from the most recent meeting of the steering group. However, the mechanisms to ensure this happens routinely are not yet fully established.

Partnerships at a local level are strong and successful. The manager has forged relationships with professionals from neighbouring local authorities and health professionals which has helped to support the centre's assessment of its effectiveness. However, the local authority has not done enough to obtain data from these agencies at a strategic level to gain even more information to assess the needs of the local area.

The centre actively promotes inclusive practice in all its activities. Its work with partners from within the local authority is strong and productive, especially for disabled children and parents, and those children who have special educational needs. All families are very well supported by the centre and its partners to access services. The centre is also effective in its support for families who may find it difficult to engage in centre activities. The centre works hard to ensure any barriers to access are overcome. For example, the centre offers assistance with transport, provides funding for childcare and centre staff have attended courses with parents who lacked the confidence to attend alone. The range of services, and families that access them, illustrates the centre's good value for money.

Safeguarding requirements are fully met. There are robust systems in place to make sure that those working with families are suitable to do so. The manager monitors Disclosure and Barring Service checks to ensure they are renewed in the five-year cycle required by the local authority. Staff are well trained and, in addition to the required level of safeguarding children training, they undertake training in related subjects such as working with families suffering domestic abuse. Staff clearly understand the referral processes and use them without hesitation if they have a concern about a child or family. Volunteers are also well informed about what to do if they are concerned about a child. Information sharing across the different agencies is good. The centre is actively involved in a programme of weekly meetings to discuss and allocate new cases, which is effective in making sure families receive support as soon as possible from the most appropriate agency. There is a similar system to review existing cases and ensure their closure or de-escalation has been properly risk assessed.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

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

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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Brotherton Children's Centre on 13 and 14 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 the activities you have used to help us to make our inspection judgements.

We found that Brotherton Children's Centre and the Whitley and Eggborough Children's Centre meet your needs well, especially since the area has so many different types of families living in it. We thought that both buildings were welcoming and that Whitley and Eggborough is a good reflection of the main centre, providing you with a familiar environment. The centre staff regularly and routinely carry out risk assessments on rooms and activities and this helps to provide you and your families with an environment that is safe and where you feel secure. The centre has good systems to check that the people working with you and your families are suitable to do so. We found that the staff work especially well with social care colleagues, the early intervention team and local health workers to protect vulnerable children. We also found that the staff are very clear about what they should do if they have any concerns about a child, and any case records they keep are well maintained and clear.

We noted that the local authority regularly visits the centre to monitor and challenge how well it is doing towards the targets it has set to help improve things for you and your families. We also found that the centre manager has a very clear understanding of the complex needs of the large area served by the centre. She manages this even though there is a limited amount of information available for some parts of the area due to the location of the centre, which is on the border of four other local authorities and hospital trusts. We have asked the local authority to work more closely with the other local authorities and health trusts to get more information to help the centre to understand your needs better.

There is a good understanding of what the centre does well and what it could do better, and because of this we think that the centre has a good capacity to sustain improvement in its service delivery to support improvement for you and your families. The centre has a steering group that it shares with four other centres in the Selby district. Senior managers made this change because not enough people were attending the separate meetings for the individual centres. We found that there is a clear commitment to making sure that the views, needs and challenges from Brotherton Children's Centre are represented at the steering group, but we have asked the centre to make certain that this happens routinely at meetings.

We saw that you and your families enjoy the activities and that they help you to make positive changes to help with your family life. We found that you actively use the wide range of support and development opportunities provided to help to improve your economic and social well-being. We also found that you are successfully improving your parenting skills, especially when you have attended one of the focused parenting courses offered by the centre. However, we found that some partners, such as adult learning providers and Jobcentre Plus, do not offer the centre information on their work with you after the centre has signposted you to their services. This means the centre often does not know the outcome of any work that has been completed with you by external partners. We have asked the centre to address this.

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