

# Dodmire Children's Centre

Rydal Road, Darlington, County Durham, DL1 4BH

**Inspection date** 18-19 July 2013

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>This inspection:</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>2</b>
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a good centre.

- Centre staff clearly know the area well and meet the needs of children and families. They focus their efforts on supporting those families who need it most and a large majority of families from the area use the centre's services.
- The enthusiastic staff team have clear roles and responsibilities and are supported very well by the dedicated leadership and management team and by governors. This results in a happy staff team who are clearly committed to offering good care, guidance and support for families and to improving further the impact of the centre.
- Families make good use of what is on offer and especially improve their parenting skills and their own and their children's health, safety and well-being.
- There is a very strong focus of working with all professionals involved with families to offer the best package of support to meet their individual needs. Trusting relationships result in parents responding well to early intervention and prevention work, to help improve the well-being of their children and their family.
- Families are highly satisfied with the quality of services at the centre and acknowledge the good support they have received to make changes and improve their lives. Parents are supported well to engage in the centre's services and existing services within the community, to help offer a broad range of services for all children regardless of their age.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The centre only offers a narrow range of adult learning courses and the tracking of adult learning and measuring the centre's effectiveness in this area are not robust enough.
- The percentage of children from target groups who achieve good levels of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains below the national average as not enough children enter school ready to learn.
- More work is required to attract families of Traveller heritage to make increased use of centre services.

### Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with centre parents, staff, members of the advisory board, volunteers, representatives from professional partnerships including health, early years and education, as well as officers from the local authority.

The inspectors visited Maidendale Community Centre, the centre's satellite venue. Inspectors took into account parents' views as expressed during the inspection, as well as through recorded evaluations of the centre's work and a review of the centre's most recent parent satisfaction survey.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as the centre's self-evaluation, development plans and data, information related to safeguarding and a selection of case files.

### Inspection team

Parm Sansoyer	Additional Inspector, Lead Inspector
Sue Pepper	Additional Inspector
Jackie Hughes	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

This is a phase one, single centre, which opened in September 2006. It provides a range of services including health services, social care, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education and outreach services. Services are provided at the children's centre as well as from Maidendale Community Centre.

The children's centre merged with Maidendale Children's Centre and there are 1840 families with children under the age of five years. Of these, 49% live in the 30% most deprived areas in the country and this is where most of the centre's target groups live. The main target groups for the centre are vulnerable children, families living in the most disadvantaged areas and lone parent families. The rest live in the 70% most deprived areas of the country. The latest data show that 7.2% of children are living in households dependent upon workless benefits, which is high for the area. There is mostly a mix of private and social housing. The population is over 97% of predominantly White British heritage, with a small percentage of Polish families and those of Traveller heritage who have settled in the community.

Most children who live in the targeted areas within the reach of the centre enter early years provision with knowledge and skills that are significantly below expectations for their age. The centre has links to five of the local primary schools.

Governance is provided by Darlington local authority in conjunction with an advisory board that includes providers, delivery partners, parents and members of the local community.

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

- Widen the range of training opportunities, including accredited courses, to improve chances of employment and develop better systems to track progression in adult learning and measure the centre's effectiveness in this area.
- In partnership with local schools, build on the newly established programmes to support children's transition into school to enable more children to move into a school environment ready to learn.
- Strengthen links with established groups within the community which attract families of Traveller heritage, to further promote the centre's work and increase participation in centre activities.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- The effective systems in place for monitoring access to services, attendance and participation clearly demonstrate the good take-up of early childhood services. The consistently high participation rates and attendance result in families improving their life chances and well-being.
- The determined staff work hard to engage the large majority of families from the main target areas, which are most in need, and engagement with these areas has increased dramatically. This results in good targeted and sustained support for those who need it most.
- Groups are popular and very well attended. For example, groups such as 'Messy Play', 'Story and Rhyme', 'Shake, Rattle and Roll' and 'Baby Massage', are very popular and used very well to engage families in improving outcomes in children's development, health, safety and well-being.
- The centre manager is also the '0-19 services co-ordinator' and leads a team of staff who work extremely well with children of all ages. This results in highly effective joined-up working and ensures that any families who will benefit from the centre's work are pinpointed quickly, when they need it most.

**The quality of practice and services****Good**

- Through very close partnership working with health services, the centre helps promote and improve health outcomes for many of the families. There is an increased trend in breastfeeding, immunisation rates are high and more children are of a healthy weight at Reception Year. A good take-up of antenatal and postnatal care and the promotion of key messages about healthy lifestyles, through groups which are open to all, mean more families improve their health.
- Data show that 57.1% of children in the area achieve good levels of development, which is below the national average. Two of the schools, in particular, are significantly lower than this. The centre has rightly targeted these schools and, therefore, children in the most deprived areas benefit from good support from the centre for their transition to school. However, the centre acknowledges this is a newly established programme and more sustained work is required to ensure more children move into the school environment ready to learn.
- Almost all parents engaged in services benefit from a range of good quality learning, including tailored support in their homes and at the centre, to improve their parenting skills. Parents clearly describe how their involvement with centre services is transforming their lives.
- The centre responds well to adults expressing a wish to take up volunteering opportunities. For example, volunteers offer support for breastfeeding and help run a number of groups and activities such as a very popular breakfast club for parents and their children.
- Effective links with partners mean parents make good use of the mobile advice service for financial matters, tax credits and housing. Although some parents have engaged in adult learning, the centre does not offer a broad enough range of training, including accredited courses, to improve opportunities for employability. The system to track adults' progress and measure the centre's effectiveness in this area is under-developed.
- A strong emphasis is placed on improving the life chances of families. This is achieved through the effective referral system, outreach work and the accurate observations and assessments used to identify needs and match families to the services they require.

**The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management****Good**

- Clear roles and responsibilities at all levels result in effective governance, leadership and management arrangements. The robust use of data, self-evaluation, use of local knowledge and collaborative working with partners, results in a continually improving centre, which is helping reduce inequalities between different groups.
- The advisory board has a broad representation from key partners and parents who have a clear idea of their individual roles and the centre's work. In addition to this, the well-established parents' forum offers more parents the opportunity to get involved and play an active part and have their say about the direction of the centre's work.
- Robust recruitment, vetting and supervision arrangements result in good support for staff and their continuous professional development. The good range of professionally qualified staff means this experienced team work very well together to ensure the shared targets for the centre are met and often exceeded.
- The inclusion of all families is a key priority for the centre. For example, disabled children are supported well to make significant progress from their starting points and a Polish group, for parents and their children, is extremely well used. Many of these users are now more confident to use some of the other groups. However, staff do not make effective use of established groups in the community which attract families of Traveller heritage, to promote the centre's work and further increase their participation. Consequently, they remain reluctant to engage, although those who are using the centre speak highly of the support they have received.
- Safeguarding children and families is a clear strength of the centre. The needs of children subject to child protection plans and looked after children are particularly well met, and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well to coordinate effective early support. As a consequence, effective early intervention helps prevent the escalation of some situations from reaching a crisis level

and parents are overwhelming positive about the use of the CAF and how it has helped to improve their lives.

- For many, this centre, including its satellite venue, is at the heart of the community and is used very well by families. The centre is bright and welcoming with a wealth of high-quality resources and information about centre services and services available locally and nationally. Consequently, families receive many high-quality services and good care, guidance and support, especially when they need it most.

**What inspection judgements mean**

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

**Children's centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20966A
<b>Local authority</b>	Darlington
<b>Inspection number</b>	421458
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1840
<b>Centre leader</b>	Pauline Cogan
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Telephone number</b>	01325 406177
<b>Email address</b>	pauline.cogan@darlington.gov.uk

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