

# Leeds - EPOSS

c/o Wetherby High School, Hallfield Lane, Wetherby, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS22 6JS

**Inspection date** 12–13 December 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 children's centre group is good.

- Good relationships and information sharing with partners from the Early Start team have enabled the group to register and actively engage the very large majority of families with centre services.
- Staff work well with social care colleagues to reduce risk to children and families. Their high-quality support helps most of the families who have specific challenges but who do not qualify for social care input.
- The leaders set targets to meet local needs which they identify from local authority data, from their local knowledge and from their own assessment of need. There are rigorous systems in place to ensure that the right targets are set. Progress towards these targets is monitored well in regular 'challenge and review' meetings.
- Leaders, managers and governors have a positive impact on the quality of practices and services delivered in this good and improving children's centre group.
- The group operates from within the Early Start Service, and this team's work is carefully checked each month against clear and measurable expectations. This is helping to ensure that the centre works well with its partners in a joined-up way which ensures that work is not duplicated.
- Good quality early years sessions are delivered from both sites and in outreach work.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Centre group staff do not work with their colleagues in the private and voluntary sector to systematically track the progress and achievement of children from families using centre services. Consequently, the group cannot clearly show the extent to which they help to prepare children for school.
- The newly appointed, interim Chair of the advisory board also directly line-manages the centre group manager. This is a conflict of interest, and limits how well the advisory board can challenge and hold the centre to account for its work.
- Some of the case files have some gaps in the recording of contacts made with families.

## Information about this inspection

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009. The centres that form part of this children's centre group are Wetherby Children's Centre and Boston Spa Children's Centre.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents, partners, the centre leaders and staff, and representatives of the parents' forum, advisory board and the local authority.

The inspectors visited Wetherby Children's Centre and Boston Spa Children's Centre.

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

## Inspection team

Linda McLarty, Lead inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector

Tim Vaughan

Her Majesty's Inspector

Sarah Drake

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the group

The Leeds: EPOSS group of children's centres was re-registered as a group of two centres in April 2012, and comprises the Boston Spa and Wetherby Children's Centres, which are approximately three and a half miles apart. The two phase-three centres deliver all of the elements of the core purpose of children's centres. They are based in a relatively affluent community which falls within the top 70% of deprived areas nationally. The majority of children enter school-based early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities typical of children of their age.

Wetherby Children's Centre is co-located with Wetherby High School. These schools were not part of this inspection as they are inspected separately. The reports are available at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

There are 1,735 children aged from birth to four years living in the reach area. The group's membership of the Early Start team ensures almost all families are known to the group, and are offered a wide range of services including early years stay-and-play sessions, family support, parenting courses and behaviour-management support. The group has identified target groups which include: young parents under 25 years of age; those experiencing domestic abuse and violence; and those at risk of affluent neglect and social isolation.

The group has registered and is actively engaged with the very large majority of families with young children in their reach area. Both centres have contact with all of the families requiring universal plus or targeted services in their reach areas, the very large majority of whom receive centre services.

The centre group is managed on behalf of the local authority by the Leeds: EPOSS Joint Collaborative Committee who delegates the day-to-day management of the children's centres to Wetherby High School. The group shares one advisory board and is led by a group children's centre services coordinator and a deputy. All members of staff work across both centres.

Almost all families in the joint reach area are of White British origin. There is a mixture of nationalities, including Asian and Polish, in the 5% who are not White British, but there is no one dominant minority ethnic group. Unemployment across the reach area is low at 4.7% with 12.5% of families also in receipt of the childcare element of working tax credit.

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

- Improve systems for tracking the achievement and progress of children from families who use the group's services, in order to provide clear evidence of the impact that the centre is having on preparing children for school.
- Appoint an independent Chair to the advisory board to ensure that board members can objectively challenge and hold the group to account for its work.
- Ensure that staff consistently record in the case files every contact they have with children most in need, to provide a secure evidence trail of involvement with families.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Good relationships and information sharing between the Early Start partners enable the centre group's staff to contact parents during pregnancy and immediately after birth, and to make links with families new to the area. In addition, good use of outreach work in individual homes and in community venues has increased the numbers of families registered, and most of the local families are now registered and actively engaged with the group's universal services.
- Weekly allocation meetings with their Early Start team partners enable centre staff to identify families in need of early intervention and support. All families assessed as in need of services at universal plus and targeted level receive support. The large majority of these families remain in receipt of services and support until their needs are met.
- Information-sharing protocols with health and social care help to provide a seamless, integrated service. Centre staff have an accurate understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of partners, thus reducing duplication of services. 'The group provides a critical link between social care and the community that it serves.' said one social-care colleague.
- The outcomes of the progress check for two-year-olds, conducted by health colleagues, is shared with centre staff. As a result every two-year-old identified as having an additional need is being supported to access appropriate help.
- Although the number of two-year-olds eligible for funded places is low in this relatively affluent area, staff have signposted all of these children to good or better quality early years provision. Sufficient capacity in the area, along with creative use of funding criteria, means that children who fall just short of meeting the eligibility criteria but who have particular needs can access funded places as early as possible. Almost all three- and four-year-olds take up their funded places.
- Imaginative use of outreach work enables those families living in outlying villages to benefit from the centre's services. Centre staff run one group, offer significant practical support to maintain the viability of other community groups and provide occasional input into eight groups to improve the focus on developing children's early skills. Staff are also beginning to seek information from relevant schools to identify further areas of need for their local families.
- Regular formal and informal consultation with centre users ensures that participation remains high. Services provided are those which users themselves identify as being most relevant to their needs. Participation at groups is carefully monitored and non-attendance followed up.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- During the good-quality early years sessions, centre staff observe children's learning and use this information to plan their next steps. However, the progress that children make is not closely tracked by centre staff after children move to local early years provision. Data indicate the large majority of children in the group's reach area attain a good level of development and the achievement gap is significantly narrower than seen nationally. However, centre group leaders cannot clearly evidence the specific difference they make to children's school readiness, or to the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile scores.
- The centre group offers a good range of activities on-site, in home visits and in local community venues delivered both directly and with partners. Many parents describe the information, advice, guidance and support from centre staff as life-changing: one parent wrote, 'Without your support I would be lost.' Inspectors were told: 'I wouldn't have been here without them.' and that the centre support '...has enabled me to care for my children much better'.
- Local authority data show that breastfeeding initiation and continuation levels, immunisation rates and the proportion of children entering school at a healthy weight exceed national levels.
- Consultation indicates that most parents feel safe, and sessions such as those around infant resuscitation, and 'Babies, brains and bonding', which is a programme adapted for delivery in the home, are raising awareness levels of how to keep children and families safe.

- Employment, levels of literacy, numeracy and adult qualifications in the area are high; nevertheless, the adult learning needs of the community are carefully assessed and appropriate provision made to cater for them. Only small numbers attend and complete accredited courses, as the need for this is not a priority in the area.
- The main adult learning needs relate to how to improve parenting skills and parents' understanding about children's early education. These courses, sometimes tailored to be delivered in the home, are received well by families who state that they have a lasting impact, particularly on routines, behaviour management and healthy eating.
- Money-management advice is available and, according to those who have experienced it, very helpful. There is appropriate signposting to Jobcentre Plus provision and the group's volunteering programme has helped some adults improve their employability by working in the centres or in the local community, with some becoming self-employed. Staff enthusiastically celebrate adults' and children's achievements, thus building self-esteem and encouraging further effort. The group is effective in reducing inequalities.
- Adults praise the centre staff's support in times of crisis, with examples of instances when this has been critical to alleviating immediate incidents of concern. Staff are persistent in their approach with those who may initially be reluctant to engage, which families appreciate.

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

Good

- The centre group receives good support and challenge from the local authority, which provides good data about the reach area, with regular visits to check the quality of the centre's work. Self-evaluation is accurate and, following specific challenge by the local authority earlier this year, is now securely supported by measureable evidence of impact. Resources are used effectively, developing strong community links while increasing participation and improving outcomes in this rural area.
- The strategic management oversight is through the Elmet Partnership of Schools and Services' (EPOSS) Joint Collaborative Committee, who delegates the day-to-day line-management of the group manager to the deputy headteacher of the adjacent secondary school. This arrangement works well to help the group to set the right targets and to measure their progress towards these. The group exceeds the key performance indicators set for Leeds' children's centres.
- At the local level of the advisory board, governance is less robust because the new, interim Chair of the advisory board line-manages, and is directly accountable for, the performance of the group manager. This affects the objectivity with which the advisory board can hold the group to account for its work. Even so, all of the three layers of governance are aware of the quality of the services and practices delivered by the group and how well its work is reducing inequalities for local families.
- The group manager is trained in supervision, and performance manages her team formally and regularly to assess their contribution to how well the centre group meets its targets. The centre group leaders and the family outreach workers are highly qualified and dedicated. Supervision sessions identify further training needs specific to their roles and individual interests, helping to develop a spread of knowledge and expertise across the team, and ensuring that information, advice and guidance are based on current evidence.
- Key to the group's success is its partnership with the Early Start team. This promotes integrated working, underpinned by clear performance indicators and effective information sharing protocols. This reciprocal joint working enables swift identification of need and timely support for local families.
- Staff receive regular safeguarding training linked to the group's policies, procedures and practice. Staff have a good understanding of the onward-referral procedures in the event of a safeguarding or child-protection concern, including those linked to concerns about a member of staff. Families experiencing domestic violence or abuse are sensitively supported. Parents told inspectors that safeguarding is highlighted at the start of activities and they could describe policies such as the mobile phone policy.
- Despite clear evidence of regular management oversight of case files, there are some gaps in

recording contact with families, indicating an insufficiently rigorous or consistent approach to record keeping. However, in the very few instances seen, this did not pose a risk to children.

- There is compelling evidence of the good partnership with social-care colleagues enabling support to be offered seamlessly when families come off a child-protection or child-in-need plan.
- Frequent consultation with parents shows high levels of satisfaction with services, and the staff are trying to capture children's views in meaningful ways. Parents are enthusiastic advocates of the centres. There are good mechanisms in place for the rapidly growing parents' forum to give their views, and up to five parents attend the advisory board regularly, where minutes evidence that their input into designing the programme is valued and used to plan services to best meet local needs.

**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 Group details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	80046
<b>Local authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	433581
<b>Managed by</b>	The centre group is managed on behalf of the local authority by the Leeds: EPOSS Joint Collaborative Committee who delegates the day-to-day management of the children's centres to Wetherby High School

<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1,735
<b>Centre leader</b>	Julie Brady
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01937 581102
<b>Email address</b>	julie.brady@leeds.gov.uk

**This group consists of the following children's centres:**

- URN 23551 Wetherby Children's Centre
- URN 20369 Boston Spa Children's Centre



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