

Sure Start Thornhill Children's Centre

Edge Top Lane, Thornhill, Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, WF12 0BH

Inspection date 8–9 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- The very large majority of children aged under five years, living in the area, are registered with the centre. A high proportion of families from the most disadvantaged communities regularly access its good quality services. The centre is engaging particularly successfully with its main target groups of pregnant teenagers, young parents and children in workless households.
- The highly skilled staff are very passionate about reducing inequalities. They assess family needs very well and carefully monitor individual progress, particularly to help parents improve their life chances and keep children safe from harm. Unemployed adults have good access to advice, guidance, education, training and volunteering opportunities to help them to return to work.
- Family support work is targeted effectively at helping those most in need. Strong partnerships and good sharing of information result in services being effectively joined up. Families speak very highly of how much the centre helps them. Comments such as, 'The centre is there for you, staff take time to listen to you and give useful advice to make family life better', and 'Staff put you at ease, you feel safe and not judged. It's a lovely place to come to', are typical.
- Managers and the advisory board are constantly reviewing the quality of services and are committed to ensuring that the centre continues to drive forward improvement at a good rate. They work well with a wide range of partners to secure high-quality services that contribute well to improving the lives of local families.

It is not outstanding because:

- The impact of the centre on school-readiness and the achievement of children is reduced because staff do not fully explore a wide range of innovative ways of promoting school-readiness or increasing parents' understanding of how to support their children's learning at home.
- The local authority and centre leaders do not always present and analyse the data it provides in an easy-to-use way that gives a clear picture of the impact of the centre's work on the lives of local families. The targets set by the local authority for the centre's business plan are not always ambitious enough or sufficiently clearly defined to be able to measure the centre's success.

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 the children's centre manager, the integrated services manager and the family support manager. They also held meetings with centre staff, parents, members of the advisory board and a number of partners including health, education and children's social care professionals.

The inspectors visited a number of sessions held during the inspection including the 'One Stop Shop', which includes the health visitor, midwife and citizens advice services, and 'Stay and Play'. They also involved the children's centre manager and deputy manager in all team meetings.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation and development plans, parent evaluations, key policies and the centre's equality and safeguarding procedures.

Inspection team

Tara Street, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Jean Webb

Additional inspector

Emily Wheeldon

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Sure Start Thornhill Children's Centre is a phase one centre, situated within the grounds of Overthorpe Church of England Academy. It also includes Thornhill Lees and Savile Town Children's Centres. It offers a range of services which include child health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes, adult education, family outreach services and crèche facilities.

There are approximately 1,511 children aged nought to five years in the reach area, of which 84.1% live in areas identified as among the 0-30% most deprived in the country. Within the reach there are significant issues surrounding high levels of infant mortality, child poverty, domestic violence and school readiness. There is a diverse mix of residents and a significant Black and Minority Ethnic community, many of whom speak English as an additional language. Housing is mostly social or private rental with some small pockets of high affluence. Levels of unemployment are high, with 27% of children living in households dependent upon workless benefits. Many of the existing jobs are low paid. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are well-below expectations for their age. There are links to the five local primary schools, and the centre's childcare provision is delivered by Overthorpe Academy Daycare. These are subject to separate inspection arrangements and the reports are available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Governance of the centre is provided by Kirklees Local Authority, in conjunction with an advisory board that includes delivery partners, members of the local community and users that attend the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Enhance the centre's impact on school readiness and the proportion of children who join local schools with the skills expected for their age by:
 - working with local schools and childcare providers to develop more innovative ways of delivering and promoting school-readiness activities
 - supporting parents to better understand the links between group activities and their child's development so that they are confident to support on-going learning in their homes.
- Improve the way that the local authority, centre leaders and the advisory board use data to measure the impact of the centre's work and to drive further improvements, by:
 - presenting all data in a way that provides a clear picture of the impact of services and aids the identification of all target groups, such as fathers and lone parents
 - working in collaboration to set more challenging and specific targets to enable leaders to measure thoroughly the impact of the centre's work.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- At 90% the very large majority of local families, including those expecting children, are registered with the centre and have access to good quality services. The centre is well-established, welcoming and has a good impact on families' lives. Staff know the community very well and regularly consult with families to ensure that the centre's services are carefully matched to the needs of different groups and effectively reflect the diverse community in which they live. As a result, it provides, for example, popular fathers' and grandparents' groups, and English courses for speakers of other languages.
- Effective systems for quickly following up all new births, together with weekly health clinics run from the centre, result in an increasing number of families visiting the centre. This enables staff to show what other services are on offer and interest those who may be less likely than others to participate.

As a result, the large majority of local families engage in activities.

- A large proportion of parents enjoy attending the 'Family Links Parenting Group' where they make new friends and learn about what it means to be a parent and how to manage their children's behaviour. The crèche provision ensures adults can access training, secure in the knowledge that their children are happy and safe.
- Staff are committed to raising awareness in the community of the good range of universal and targeted services the centre delivers. They are regularly present at school sites, out in the area, or they use the more personal touch of knocking on families' doors. Family workers ensure those families who face challenging circumstances quickly get the right specialist, professional support and practical help they need.
- The vast majority of children from target groups take up the entitlement to free early education when it is offered. Close partnerships with providers in the private sector help to make sure that parents are fully informed about free Early Years education in the neighbourhood.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre provides a good range of well-planned activities with a clear balance of universal and targeted services to meet the needs of its diverse community. A wide range of sessions, such as 'Let's Talk' and 'Babies into Books', focus on developing children's good communication skills. Strong partnership working helps to identify any children with special educational needs or developmental delay.
- A strong drive is in place to promote healthy eating and active lifestyles through, for example, 'Cook and Eat' and 'Let's Move 2'. As a result, at 8.9% levels, of obesity are in line with national averages. There is a high take up of the immunisation programme and healthy vitamins. Levels of breastfeeding are slowly rising and initiatives such as the 'Baby Bistro' breastfeeding group are helping to raise awareness in the community.
- The quality of care, guidance and support provided for families is good and effectively reduces inequalities. One-to-one support, through home visits and specialist work, for those most in need helps them overcome often complex problems, such as infant mortality, and has a significant impact on their well-being and in reducing risks.
- Adults, including those from workless homes, benefit from a good range of services that enhance their education, employment opportunities and life chances. Many gain qualifications and others find paid work following training. Parents are actively encouraged to become volunteers, and take-up rates are good with most working in the centre and helping to run various activities alongside centre staff.
- The centre has good relationships with some local schools and early years settings but when children start school their skills are well below those expected for their age. School readiness workshops, which cover such issues as potty training and behaviour management, are starting to help some children be better prepared. However, the range of school-readiness sessions is narrow and the centre does not do enough to increase engagement of families and get children ready for school. In addition, staff do not always support parents sufficiently well, particularly in stay and play sessions, to gain a clear understanding of the links between group activities and their own child's development, or how they can support learning at home.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The centre manager and deputy manager are totally committed to making sure local families enjoy healthy and fulfilled lives and overcome the personal challenges they face. They have built a hard-working team whose members have the necessary qualifications, experience and expertise to respond well to children's and families' needs. Performance management and professional supervision of staff are well established. Strong partnership work results in families, particularly those most in need, benefiting from well-located and resourced services.

- Data provided by the local authority to centre leaders and advisory board members is not always organised and analysed in a way that presents a clear picture of the centre's impact on local families, including those in target groups such as fathers and lone parents. Additionally, the local authority sets targets that are not always sufficiently challenging and are not helping the centre to secure outstanding practice. Nevertheless, the centre does its best with the available data and, because of leaders', staff's and partners' excellent knowledge of the local community, recognises where it needs to develop further.
- The advisory board contains a wide range of committed professional partners as well as a good number of parents. Parents also have the opportunity to contribute to shaping the services provided by the centre through their involvement in the active family forum. The board focuses its discussions on the impact of the centre's provision on the lives of local families and it is actively involved in steering developments.
- Safeguarding matters are taken very seriously. Staff vetting procedures are thorough, and ongoing training on aspects of child protection ensures that staff's skills are up-to-date. The centre makes effective use of the Common Assessment Framework to safeguard children subject to a child protection plan, looked after children or those who are identified as in most need. Staff provide good practical support for some very difficult and challenging circumstances, such as domestic violence, which helps parents to reduce the risk of harm to their children.

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

Unique reference number	23066
Local authority	Kirklees
Inspection number	430198
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,511
Centre manager	Janine Wrighton
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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