

Ireland Wood Children's Centre

c/o Ireland Wood Primary School, Raynel Gardens, Ireland Wood, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS16 6BW

Inspection date	12–13 February 2014
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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.

- Most of the local families use the centre regularly, and the large majority of families who need specific, targeted help continue to use centre services until their needs are met.
- The children of families using centre services are very well-prepared for school, through the good quality teaching in the on-site childcare and in 'stay and play' sessions, where staff effectively help parents to support their children's learning.
- Courses, activities and outreach work effectively improve parenting skills, help parents to manage their children's behaviour and to keep their families safe and well.
- The centre staff work well with their partners in the Early Start team to keep local families healthy and safe. A much greater proportion of children enters school at a healthy weight than is seen nationally and across Leeds.
- The local authority provides good support and increasing challenge. Officers regularly visit to check the centre's progress and to help the centre's management to provide convincing evidence of the difference it is making. The centre's leadership, management and governance can show year-on-year improvement to practice and services.

It is not outstanding because:

- The good work of the centre is not reflected in the quality of systems to help staff to plan and organise their work. Existing arrangements are often overly complicated, and not manageable enough to help management gather and analyse easily the impact of their work.
- The Chair of the advisory board directly line-manages the centre manager. This is a conflict of interest, and limits how well the advisory board challenges and holds the centre to account for its work. The advisory board members have not received training to support their roles and not enough parents formally contribute to decision-making.
- The centre management is not able to show how well it supports adult learning, as systems are not fully in place to track how many adults take up and complete courses, and what difference this makes to their job prospects.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager and deputy, centre staff, officers from the local authority, professional partners from health, education and social care, parents, volunteers and representatives of the advisory board.

The inspectors undertook joint observations of a range of the centre's provision, with the manager and with the deputy headteacher of the adjacent school. They attended an allocations meeting and a meeting of the children's council.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including self-evaluation documents, development and planning data, performance monitoring records, parental satisfaction surveys and consultation information, programme evaluations and policies and procedures linked to safeguarding, including a range of case files.

Inspection team

Linda McLarty, Lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrew Clark	Additional inspector
Phillip David Ellwand	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Ireland Wood Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre which operates as a company limited by guarantee, with charitable status. It has a management committee to oversee all aspects of the running and financial management of the centre, under the overall governance of the local authority. The centre also receives governance from a Joint Collaborative Committee and from an advisory board. The centre is located within Ireland Wood Primary School, and the centre manager is line-managed by the headteacher of this school. The centre works within the Early Start team.

There is a 107 place on-site childcare facility. The centre sometimes works with Horsforth Children's Centre. The childcare, school and the Horsforth centre were inspected separately and their inspection reports are available at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

There are approximately 1371 children under four years living within the centre's reach area in a community ranked within the 30% most deprived areas nationally. The centre opened in 2005 and offers childcare and family services on a universal, universal plus and targeted level from the centre, the community room of the adjacent primary school and from Tinshill Learning Centre. The majority of the centre's work is focused on the areas of greatest need to the north west of the centre, where 45% of the families live.

Unemployment across the reach area is 20% with 29% of families in receipt of benefits. The main ethnicity in the area is White British.

Children enter school-based, early years provision across the reach area with skills and capabilities at, or below, the levels typically seen in children of their age.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve the way the centre's documentation and records support and reflect the good work taking place by:
 - improving the precision of the targets in the development plan by aligning them more closely with the annual conversation targets, including clearer success criteria to enable accurate measurement of progress to help the advisory board and the local authority to hold the centre to account
 - align performance management objectives more closely to the improvement priorities in order to recognise and encourage staff's contribution towards the targets
 - systematically gather users' views to help shape future provision.
- Appoint an independent Chair to the advisory board and provide training to all board members to enable them to have the confidence and knowledge to challenge objectively and hold the centre to account for its work and to encourage more parents to contribute to decision-making.
- Work with partners to coordinate and extend the provision of adult-learning opportunities better and improve systems to track adults' progression and achievement.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- As a result of good information-sharing with health partners, the staff are very successfully working with parents from pregnancy onwards. Consequently, the centre has registered most families in its area, and is actively engaged with 64% of the total population, and with the large

majority of the families who need support the most. The good local knowledge of the staff is underpinned by accurate, detailed data from the local authority about the families in the area, including those who transfer in.

- The weekly allocation meetings with the Early Start team and good partnership working in the Early Help team ensure that the centre staff offer timely support which prioritises those in need of targeted help. This includes families who may otherwise be reluctant to engage with centre services. Non-attendance at centre services is followed up diligently.
- Tracking shows that staff work successfully with the majority of families most in need of their support, keeping them engaged with services until their needs are fully met. They sustain families extremely well in times of crisis – as one parent told inspectors, 'All the parents I've met in this group feel this is a life-changer.'
- Skilled outreach workers undertake in-depth assessments, with good analysis of risk, ensuring that they focus their work on families who need their help the most. On-going monitoring ensures that families who have accessed specialist support and return to universal services remain supported, if necessary.
- There is some good partnership work in supporting access to adult learning, although there is insufficient monitoring of the extent of the provision, or its success in meeting targets, and too little coordination of provision across the area.
- Most three- and four-year-olds take up their funded places, as do the large majority of eligible two-year-olds, and there is sufficient good or better quality provision in the reach area for all who need places.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The large majority of children in the group's reach area reach a good level of development by the time they leave their Reception classes. The achievement gap in the area served by the centre is significantly narrower than seen nationally. Children who have used centre services enter the adjacent school with higher levels of skill and ability than children whose families do not access the centre.
- Children with additional needs also achieve well because of the good support provided by the centre, and its linked childcare facility. Highly qualified staff deliver high quality educational experiences and help parents to promote their children's learning and development very well.
- Good quality information, advice, guidance, useful equipment and home-safety assessments help keep local families safe and well. Comments such as, 'They're all like family really - I'm a lone parent and they really helped with family crises' describe the staff's very effective practical and emotional support in times of crisis and on-going difficulty. Parents describe the exceptional support for adults experiencing, and children witnessing, domestic violence as making a profound difference to their quality of life.
- The centre is effectively reducing inequalities in early education, health and social care outcomes. Data show that breastfeeding initiation and continuation levels, immunisation rates and the proportion of children entering school at a healthy weight are higher than those seen in Leeds and nationally.
- Adults are nurtured through some very challenging circumstances to gain literacy and numeracy qualifications. Some progress on to volunteering opportunities, employment or further training. However, despite some good partnership work in supporting access to adult learning, there is insufficient monitoring of the take-up or impact of learning opportunities or of the success in meeting targets.
- Good numbers of parents access high quality activities which improve their confidence, self-esteem and parenting ability. These include evidence-based parenting programmes and outreach-based support for parents reluctant to attend a course. Evaluations are overwhelmingly positive about the specific improvements to the parenting and behaviour management skills of course attendees.

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

- The management is unanimously praised by parents and partners for the impact it has, due to a welcoming, non-judgemental approach and the trusting relationships developed with parents. However, the good quality provision and effectiveness of the centre is not supported well enough by the systems in place to manage the centre's processes and activities. These are not sufficiently streamlined to inform self-evaluation, drive improvements and record the outcomes of some aspects of the work more efficiently.
- For example, the local authority sets challenging, quantifiable targets arising from the annual challenge meetings, focused on reducing inequalities, but these are not explicitly referenced in the centre's development plan. The plan contains many other targets, often with no measurable success criteria, making it more difficult for management and governance to evaluate their impact.
- The performance management records for staff are of variable quality and, for some staff, simply identify training needs and do not provide clear evidence of holding staff to account for their contribution to the centre's priorities.
- Systems to collate and analyse parental feedback from consultation are overly complicated, and do not help the centre to gather, analyse and use parents' views to shape services. Trainees' attendance, completion and onward progression following adult-learning courses are not recorded in a way which is easy for staff to analyse and use to improve outcomes.
- Management is occasionally too modest about its achievements, partly because systems to gather evidence of impact are unmanageable. However, discussion shows that the centre managers and advisory board have an accurate understanding of their strengths, areas for development and key priorities. They are exceeding most of the Leeds key performance indicators, including for target groups, through a good balance of universal and targeted services.
- Staff attract and retain high levels of engagement from families and the centre is using its resources effectively to reduce inequalities and close the gaps in outcomes.
- Governance is well-established at strategic level but, at local level, there is a conflict of interest because the Chair of the advisory board also line-manages the centre manager. This means he is chairing a group which challenges and holds himself to account for the impact of his line-management. Not enough parents attend the advisory board or contribute fully to the design of services. Board members have not received training to support their role.
- Centre management and staff, including those in the on-site childcare, are qualified to a high level. Continuous professional development is used effectively to develop staff roles and individual interests, to strengthen the staff team and to ensure that information, advice and guidance remain current.
- A robust service specification ensures that Early Start partners are held to account well for their contribution to the centre's targets. This also minimises duplication of resources and promotes integrated service delivery. There is a strong partnership between the centre and the on-site childcare and adjacent school.
- There is good support for families experiencing domestic violence, within a culture of robust safeguarding underpinned by staff training, careful risk assessment and effective partnership working. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well by the centre. The local authority's duty and advice team provides a good oversight of referrals, so that services have clear responsibilities for key work with families.
- Contact with parents is frequent, through a variety of social media. These contacts are used well to gauge satisfaction and to advertise services, but they are not sufficiently focused on helping parents to contribute to shaping services. The centre is very successful at capturing children's views about the services they attend through the monthly 'children's council.'

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	21612
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	433599
Managed by	The centre is managed on behalf of the local authority by a management committee who delegates the line-management of the centre manager to the head teacher of Ireland Wood Primary School.

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1371
Centre leader	Linda Parkin
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0113 281 7829
Email address	Linda.parkin@leeds.gov.uk

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