

Lowfold Children and Family Centre

Exley Road, Keighley, West Yorkshire, BD21 1LT

Inspection date

19–20 March 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:		
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Not enough children or parents from lone parent families, workless households or minority ethnic groups regularly engage in the centre's services.
- Although, the proportion of children in the local area achieving a good level of development at five years old has improved in the last four years, the lowest-achieving children are not catching up with their peers. Too many children start school without the skills expected of them.
- The proportion of mothers breastfeeding their babies at six-to-eight weeks is low and the number of mothers smoking during their pregnancy remains high.
- Recently introduced systems to monitor and track how well the centre contributes to the progress that adults and children make have not been completely established. As a result, the centre cannot fully demonstrate the impact of its services.
- Data provided by the local authority and health partners are not sufficiently precise or timely which limits the centre's ability to target some families and to sharply monitor improvement targets.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Leaders and managers are highly committed to improving the centre and have created a strong team of staff who share their passion for meeting the needs of families.
- The partnership between the children's centre and the family centre is seamless. The centre prioritises safeguarding and the team of family support workers provides good quality one-to-one support to the most vulnerable families and children.
- A wide range of professional partners work well together to review and extend services and activities to help increase engagement of families from the most deprived areas.
- The centre provides good opportunities for parents to volunteer and develop skills which help improve their confidence and employability.
- The advisory board has good parental representation and provides strong support and challenge to the centre.
- The good quality crèche provision enables parents to access activities at the centre, knowing their children are well looked after.

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 senior staff from the children's centre, the family centre, the local authority, and other staff from the centre. Inspectors also met with a range of partners, including those from health services, educational organisations, social care and representatives from the advisory board. They listened to the views of parents.

The inspectors observed the centre's work including the crèche and sessions, such as 'Baby Massage', 'Childminder Stay and Play', 'Life Coaching', 'Embrace' and 'Cook and Eat'. They looked at a range of relevant documentation. They looked in detail at a number of case files of children, such as those subject to a child protection plan, those deemed to be children in need and others in receipt of outreach support.

The inspectors visited a 'Stay n Play' session at the Bangladeshi Community and met with partners at Holycroft School.

Inspection team

Jean Marie Blakeley, Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Jackie Phillips	Additional inspector
Shirley Barnes	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Low Fold Children and Family Centre is a stand-alone children's centre. It shares a building with a local authority family centre which was not subject to this inspection. Most of the area the children's centre serves is identified as between the 5% and 30% most deprived in the country.

The local authority manages the centre, with governance provided by an advisory board comprising key stakeholders, including parents. The manager of the family centre is the line manager of the children's centre manager.

Approximately 1214 children from birth to four years live in the centre's reach area. The majority of families are of White British heritage. Around one-third belong to black and minority ethnic groups, in particular Bangladeshi and Pakistani families, and the number of families from Eastern Europe in the area is increasing. Around one quarter of children live in families that have no adult in work. Children's skills on entry to early years provision are below or well below those typical for their age.

Leaders have identified the children in most need of support as those from; families affected by domestic violence; low income families including workless families, lone parents and teenage parents; parents with mental health and substance misuse issues; minority ethnic families particularly those from Eastern Europe, and disabled children. The centre provides a wide range of services, including some on-site health care; adult learning; one-to-one support and a range of activities for children. Services and activities are provided in the centre and in a range of partners' venues in the community.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of ethnic minority families, workless families and lone parents regularly accessing centre services to at least the large majority.
- Embed the recently developed tracking systems to check on and improve the attendance and achievement of all children and adults who access the centre and partners' services.
- Ensure that the majority of children have at least the skills expected of them when they start school and that the lowest-attaining children catch up with their peers.
- The local authority and health professionals, should improve the timeliness, accuracy, and sharing of precise data so that leaders and managers can sharpen their focus on improvement targets.
- Together with health professionals, increase the proportion of mothers who continue to breastfeed their babies and those that cease smoking throughout pregnancy.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Although the centre is targeting its outreach services at the areas of most deprivation, too few minority ethnic families, workless families or lone parents access the centre's services on a regular basis.
- Data and information from partners is not always reliable and timely. For example, the centre does not always receive information about the birth of new babies early enough in order for them to provide early support. Although the centre works hard to provide home visits to all mothers with new babies, it is only successful in a minority of cases.
- The centre engages well with families that experience domestic violence and with mothers who have mental health issues, including those with postnatal depression. Close partnership with the

family centre means that most children in need or those subject to a child protection plan engage in centre activities.

- The centre works closely with the local authority to ensure that there is sufficient early years provision in the area. All two- years-olds and most eligible three- and four-year olds take up their entitlement to free early education.
- Parents of children with special additional needs and/or disabilities have good access to support at a monthly meeting held at the centre. In addition, they have good access to training, such as Makaton training to help improve communication with their children who may have speech and language problems. As a result, the centre's engagement with disabled children is good.
- The high quality crèche provision at the centre increases access to learning, training and volunteering opportunities for parents. Parents told inspectors that they would not be able to attend courses at the centre if they did not have access to childcare in the crèche.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- The centre provides a good range of universal and targeted activities and resources for those who attend. However, the low number of families from some target groups regularly engaging with the centre reduces its overall impact on improving outcomes for children and on reducing inequalities and improving life chances.
- The centre has close relationships with local schools and early years settings and it works well together to plan sessions to help prepare children for school, such as 'Little Owls' and 'Stay n Play'. However, not enough children from target groups regularly access these activities and too many children start school with skills which are well below those typical for their age.
- Breastfeeding rates at six-to-eight weeks are below the Bradford and national average and not increasing rapidly enough, and the proportion of mothers smoking at birth remains too high.
- Parents benefit from an appropriate range of learning activities at the centre and available through partners' adult learning provision. Although initial take-up of courses is often good, attendance at sessions is erratic, which limits the impact on parents' ability to improve both their skills and their families' economic stability. The centre celebrates achievement, such as the completion of a course, which helps to build individual adults' confidence.
- Recently introduced systems to track the progress of children and adults attending a range of services and activities at the centre and in partners' provision have not been fully established. As a result, the centre cannot demonstrate the full impact of its services.
- Schools recognise that the personal and social skills of children who have attended sessions at the centre are generally better than for those children who have not.
- The good support from family support workers, in partnership with a wide range of professionals, is helping some families to move out of crisis situations and to keep children safe. The successful use of a 'family star' shows the progress being made in assessing families' needs and agreeing improvement targets. Case files are of a high standard.
- Parents are actively encouraged to become volunteers. They receive good training and support which has led to some parents helping to run activities alongside centre staff and to some gaining employment.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The centre manager is knowledgeable about the community's needs and is well-respected. She is supported by a skilled team of staff and strong leadership team that share her passion and drive to provide good services for families. The manager and staff work hard to try and change the local culture of low motivation and engagement with services.
- Data provided by the local authority and health partners are not sufficiently precise, accurate or timely. This limits the ability at all levels of leadership, management and governance to maintain a sharp focus on monitoring engagement and improvement targets.
- Development plans are accurately focused on improving access and outcomes for families. Previous targets, such as increasing registration rates, have been successfully met. However, actions to

increase the regular attendance of some key priority groups are not having a rapid enough impact on reducing inequalities and improving life chances for these families.

- Safeguarding is well-established across the centre and arrangements meet statutory requirements. The seamless partnership between the children's centre and the family centre means children receive uninterrupted access to a wide range of service. This helps keep the most vulnerable children safe and improve their life chances.
- The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used well and helps the centre to provide effective support for the whole family. Close working and sharing of information between family support workers, family centre staff and the social care team helps to improve the safety of children. This ensures good levels of support for children subject to a child protection plan and looked-after children.
- Resources are used appropriately to increase access to services by providing targeted activities in the areas of most need. A good number of sessions are held in partners' premises. Partners, such as schools, are heavily involved in reviewing the success of initiatives to improve the attendance of the most vulnerable families.
- Staff are effectively supported in their work, through regular supervision and opportunities for professional development.
- Parents are represented well on the advisory board and bring a wealth of local knowledge. The board supports and challenges the centre well and has a strong influence in shaping services.

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

Unique reference number	21866
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	430178
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1214
Centre leader	Theresa Deighton-Power
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Telephone number	01535 618300
Email address	Theresa.Deighton-Power@bradford.gov.uk

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