

Frizinghall and Heaton Village Children's Centre

3rd Floor Future House, Bradford West Yorkshire, BD4 7EB

Inspection dates	4–5 November 2014
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection: Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
		Not previously inspected	
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		Good	2

Summary of key findings for children and families

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

- A large majority of families, particularly those living in the most disadvantaged areas, do not yet sustain their engagement with the centre. Therefore, many families do not yet regularly benefit from what the centre offers.
- The gap is too great between most children's achievement at the end of Reception and the achievement of the lowest 20%. It shows no signs of narrowing and links with primary schools at a strategic level are weak.
- Not enough eligible two-year-olds access free early education.
- Few adults access adult education and develop skills leading to employment.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Good quality leadership, governance and management combine rigorous use of data with creativity to meet local needs. All staff work as a team whose complementary skills are well focused on safety and reducing inequalities. These two strengths underpin the centre's trend of improvement.
- Good knowledge of the local community and its changing circumstances directly informs decision making at a strategic level and also staff's work 'on the ground'.
- Outreach work in the community translates the challenge of having no dedicated building into a positive, bringing activities to where potential users live and greatly increasing registration numbers.
- Good partnerships with a range of stakeholders and professionals enhance the centre's provision.
- Parents are confident that staff listen to and act on their views both through the vibrant parents' forum and through evaluations of activities. Parents play a large role in guiding the centre's work.
- One user's comment, 'I have had so much support and friendship which has carried me through hard times,' encapsulates the good quality support and guidance that staff provide for families in the greatest need.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Increase the proportion of families that sustain their engagement with the centre, particularly those families who live in the areas of highest deprivation.
- In order to reduce the gap between the achievement of most children at the end of Reception and that of the lowest 20%:
 - increase the uptake of free early education by eligible two-year-olds, particularly by the children of those families entitled to free school meals
 - work more closely with primary schools at a strategic level, to enhance children's readiness for school and to record and track the impact that the centre has on this work.
- Increase the opportunities for adults to access education and activities designed to enhance their development of skills, in order to improve the economic well-being of their families.

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with: centre leaders and staff; representatives from the local authority; the vice chairman of the advisory board; members of the parents' forum; parent champions; the parental involvement worker; individual parents and those attending group activities; a midwife and a health visitor; a member of the advice service; community workers who organise the Family Café and the Job Club; and the manager of a privately run nursery. They held telephone conversations with the area family support officer, and providers of adult education from Shipley College and the Workers' Educational Association.

The inspectors visited community accommodation used by the centre to deliver its activities including St. Margaret's Church Hall, Heaton St Barnabas Village Hall, and the Play Bus, parked opposite Frizinghall Primary School.

They observed the centre's work, including two 'Let's Play Together' sessions, and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as that relating to governance, safeguarding and the engagement of families.

Inspection team

Sarah Drake, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Wendy Pawson

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Frizinghall and Heaton Village Children's Centre opened in September 2011, and was the last children's centre in the local authority to open. It is a stand-alone, 'virtual' centre which has an office base on the third floor of council buildings. The centre uses three community sites to deliver activities. It is managed directly by the local authority and is held to account by an advisory board comprised of a variety of stakeholders, including parents. It provides access to a range of activities including those to help parents support their children's learning, health advice, family support and adult learning. Over the past two years there have been changes in leadership and staffing. The centre is managed on a job-share basis. One of the part-time managers is temporarily seconded elsewhere.

There are approximately 858 children aged under-five years living within the densely populated, urban area served by the centre. Most families belong to minority ethnic groups. The large majority are of Pakistani heritage but increasing numbers are from Eastern Europe. One quarter of families live in areas designated as among the 15% most deprived in the country. Levels of worklessness are above the national figure and around one quarter of adults have no qualifications. Most children's skills on entry to early years provision are below those typical for their age, particularly their communication skills.

The centre has identified the most significant groups in need of its support as children living in the areas of greatest deprivation, migrant families from Eastern Europe, and disabled children and those with special educational needs.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Leaders' good local knowledge, combined with reliable data, enables them to identify accurately those groups who are more reluctant than others to make use of the centre's services. They use the information well to focus outreach work on those most in need of support. As a result, most families are now registered with the centre and have benefited from at least one home visit or other experience of what the centre has to offer.
- The engagement of all groups is on an upward trend. A majority of Eastern European families and of families with disabled children or whose children have special educational needs now have sustained contact with the centre. Increasing numbers of families living in the most disadvantaged areas are also now participating regularly but the proportion is not as great as for other groups.
- Good partnerships with health professionals and the neighbouring children's centre mean that those expecting babies have suitable access to antenatal support and guidance.
- The centre's creative use of community accommodation, along with the local authority's highly visible play bus, brings its activities into the heart of the areas where most families live. This reduces barriers to engagement and also means that, despite the lack of a permanent building, families have regular access to advice and support. Staff are well organised and persistent in attempting to re-engage those who have not had recent contact with the centre.
- Most three- and four-year-olds access early education and a careful eye is kept on ensuring their regular attendance. Over the past year, the numbers of eligible two-year-olds accessing free early education have increased significantly but the proportion is not yet large enough. In particular, the numbers of children benefiting from this provision, whose families are eligible for free school meals, are low. This inhibits their development of skills in readiness for school.

The quality of practice and services**Requires improvement**

- Parents who regularly use the centre's services value them highly. The range of good quality activities, including access to weekly debt and benefits advice, helps them to improve their families' well-being. Users' comments such as, 'the centre has changed my life,' and 'staff give the child and parent aspirations of what is possible,' are typical. However, a large majority of families do not yet regularly benefit from what the centre offers reducing the impact of services on improving children's well-being and reducing inequalities.
- Those who start adult education sessions almost always complete them successfully. The volunteer programme is well supervised and has led directly to paid work for some. However, there are too few opportunities for adults to increase their skills and, therefore, the potential for them to enhance their families' economic well-being.
- An average proportion of children achieve a good level of development at the end of Reception and an above-average proportion of those living in the most disadvantaged circumstances do so. However, the gap between the lowest achieving children and others remains stubbornly wide. Despite the efforts of leaders, there is little liaison at a strategic level with primary schools, to highlight specific needs, guide the centre's activities, or to track the progress of children who have used centre services. This restricts leaders' ability to adapt services in order to enhance children's readiness for school, or to confirm the impact of the centre's work.
- 'Let's Play Together' sessions are well planned, with a good focus on children's skill development. Staff offer parents tips, such as ideas for playing with boxes, which they find helpful. For example, one spontaneously sang the 'jumping bunnies' rhyme as her son bounced on the mini-trampoline.
- In partnership with others, the centre is helping to sustain positive levels of breastfeeding, immunisation, smoking during pregnancy and childhood obesity. Its proactive approach to the challenge presented by the absence of dentists in the area is increasing the uptake of fluoride varnishing and regular tooth-brushing by local children.
- Promoting families' safety is at the forefront of the centre's work. Parents are aware of their responsibilities and children know the importance of asking before they play outside. Staff conduct home safety checks and provide access to safety equipment. Positive parenting and nurturing sessions help parents to 'try to reflect more and use more praise'.
- Staff provide good levels of care, support and guidance for families. They are skilled at gaining families' confidence, which often leads to the identification of additional needs. For example, one family was first encountered through outreach 'door-knocking' and is hugely grateful for the financial advice, 'play at home' sessions and access to nursery places to which centre staff have helped them gain access.

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

- Despite staffing changes and the lack of dedicated accommodation, strong leadership, governance and management are driving the centre forward so that it is now known to most local families and used by growing numbers. In this way it is becoming increasingly effective at promoting equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination.
- Policies, procedures, practices and service level agreements are regularly reviewed and adapted when necessary. Staff appreciate the regular supervision that leaders provide. They have access to a range of training and constantly strive to improve in order to provide the best quality service for families. They operate as a lively, committed team.
- Fully aware of the unique challenges faced by the centre, the local authority provides very regular, closely focused support which is helping to increase its effectiveness. The authority provides extensive, useful data which leaders use well to monitor and target the centre's work.
- The advisory board holds staff and the local authority to close account about the difference that the centre is making to the lives of local families. Its members have a good understanding of the quality of practice and services, data on the centre's performance, the performance management of staff and what is being done to drive improvement.

- Resources are of good quality and used to good effect. Close partnership with local groups, as well as creative and flexible enhancement of community buildings, ensures that centre activities take place in a safe, welcoming environment. The jointly run 'Family Café', for example, draws the community together and successfully promotes families' health and well-being.
- Safeguarding arrangements, including staff recruitment and training, fulfil requirements. Case records include suitable detail and confirm support workers' effectiveness. Good partnership working with other professionals, including use of the Common Assessment Framework, leads to clear identification of families' needs, followed by effective action which helps to reduce the risk of harm to children identified as in need. Senior social care staff confirm that there are currently no looked after children or children subject to child protection plans within the centre's reach area.
- Parents play a high-profile role in the success of the centre. The parents' forum brings forward their views and has helped to introduce a newsletter. Parent champions promote the importance of early learning. Parents' evaluations of activities guide the following programme. Children's voices are also heard, as demonstrated by the photograph of one, happily clothed in fancy dress, with her words underneath. 'I really like my first day at Stay and Play and want to come every week.'

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	20611
Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	452787
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	858
Centre leader	Tahmima Tahir
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	07582 101644
Email address	tahmima.tahir@bradford.gov.uk

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