

# Cross Gates and Manston Children's Centre

Cross Gates Primary School, Poole Crescent, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS15 7NB

<b>Inspection dates</b>	20–21 May 2015
<b>Previous inspection date</b>	Not previously inspected

<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		Outstanding	1
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.

- This 'pocket-sized' centre provides a very warm welcome to all, making good use of its resources, most importantly its well-established staff, to help local families to thrive. Very well guided and supported by the centre manager, all staff are approachable and also persistent in encouraging any more reluctant potential users. This means that families see the centre as a safe source of help.
- Strong partnerships with health and other agencies mean that most families and those expecting children are registered with the centre. A very large majority of those who are identified as most in need of the centre's support regularly engage in, and benefit from, its good quality services.
- Users and professionals alike greatly praise the positive impact that the centre's services have on families' and children's well-being. Staff are skilled at pinpointing individuals' needs and enabling them to build on their strengths. They have a significant impact on families' lives.
- Highly effective support for adults, including those experiencing domestic violence, means that they develop self-belief and a range of skills. Good numbers volunteer at the centre or elsewhere, which enhances their opportunities to progress to further training, education and into employment.
- Leaders' careful tracking of those children and adults who are identified as likely to be the most vulnerable shows that they make progress that is well sustained.
- Work designed to improve children's readiness for school is having a positive impact.
- Reflective, committed and creative leadership, governance and management have a positive impact on the quality of the centre's practice and services, and underpin its continual improvement. The advisory board and dynamic parents' forum contribute well to this.
- Typical comments such as, 'Parents come in with one purpose, get that fulfilled and go away with something extra', confirm the centre's many strengths.

### It is not outstanding because:

- Not enough mothers initiate breastfeeding and then continue to breastfeed their babies for at least six to eight weeks.
- Leaders do not always use data to best advantage when evaluating the impact of the centre's work.

**What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

- In order to improve the health of local families, work with partners to increase significantly the proportion of mothers who initiate breastfeeding and continue to breastfeed their babies for at least six to eight weeks.
- Improve leadership, governance and management by making even better use of data to inform the centre's evaluation of its effectiveness.

**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. It was carried out at the same time as Swarcliffe Children's Centre, with which it works in collaboration.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with: centre staff; the headteacher of Cross Gates Primary School; a range of partners from the local authority, health and education; members of the advisory board and the parents' forum; a range of parents.

The inspectors visited the centre, Swarcliffe Children's Centre and Cross Gates library.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation such as data relating to the centre's services and self-evaluation of its impact on local families, development planning and documents about safeguarding. They undertook one joint observation of an activity with a senior member of staff. Throughout the inspection, they also took the opportunity to talk with adult and child users of the centre.

**Inspection team**

Sarah Drake Lead inspector	Additional inspector
Judith Elderfield	Additional inspector
Jane Hughes	Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Cross Gates and Manston Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre which works in collaboration with Swarcliffe Children's Centre and is part of a larger cluster of four centres. The centre shares a site with Cross Gates Primary School, whose headteacher is also the leader of the centre. The school did not form part of this inspection, but a report of its quality can be found on the website: [www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted). The centre manager runs the centre on a day-to-day basis. Governance is provided by the local authority and an advisory board which comprises a range of professionals and parents.

There are approximately 752 children aged under five living locally. Around one quarter of these live in areas identified as among the 20% most disadvantaged nationally. Most families are White British, with a small but growing minority that belongs to a range of minority ethnic groups. A small proportion of children live in families dependent on workless benefits. Children's skills on entry to early education are generally below those that are typical for their age. The centre has identified those families most in need of its support as: teenage pregnant mothers and parents who have additional needs; two-year-old children with delayed language and communication skills; children living in workless households.

The centre provides a range of services, including activities to support children's and adults' learning and families' health. It delivers some activities at the local library and community centre, and some in collaboration with other centres.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Outstanding

- Close partnership working with others means that centre staff receive timely information about expectant mothers, new births, and families with children aged under five who are newly arrived in the locality. This, combined with staff's excellent local knowledge and resolute approach, means that the numbers of those registered and engaging with the centre's services are increasing and now include most families, including those who might be less likely to participate.
- Centre staff offer all-comers a bright, welcoming environment, a warm smile and time to listen. As necessary, they visit families' homes and build successful relationships with them. The on-site health clinic provides a good initial reason to visit. After experiencing this and its accompanying Stay and Play group, most parents and children are more than happy to return and use the services that the centre offers.
- All two-year-old children identified with delayed communication skills, and all teenage parents with additional needs are in regular contact with the centre, as are most families dependent on workless benefits. A large majority of those living in the areas of highest deprivation, and of all children aged under two, are also engaged with the centre's services.
- The local authority's Early Start process leads to careful identification of different families' needs and allocation of support for them. At fortnightly meetings, centre managers and other members of the Guidance and Support cluster review the impact of any actions and whether services need to be adjusted. This concerted approach eases families' access to the right services at the right time.
- In 2014, centre staff ensured that more two-year-old children than initially identified by the local authority as eligible for free early education took up their places. A large majority is doing so in the current year, as are most three- and four-year olds. Children's early access to good quality provision has a positive impact on their readiness to learn.

**The quality of practice and services**

Good

- In collaboration with local centres and venues, the centre offers a good range of relevant services that are open to all, and others aimed at those with particular needs. From 'Baby Massage' that helps with bonding and colic, to groups such as 'Little Bookworms' which develop children's learning and communication skills, or 'Power of Me' that promotes self-confidence, activities are planned and delivered well. This means that participants enjoy and learn from sessions and keep on returning for more, so that inequalities are reduced and families' lives are improved.
- The managers of Cross Gates and Manston, and Swarcliffe centres collaborate successfully to improve the quality of local childcare provision. This means that there is a concerted effort to enhance, for example, children's communication skills. Staff now track the progress of increasing numbers of children and, because of clear explanations about their value, many parents now contribute to their child's Memory Book.
- School staff state that, due to the centre's work, including 'Nearly Nursery' courses, 'families now know about [the impact of] dummies and bottles and that communication is a tool for learning.' Intensive 'Chatterbox' sessions support those with delayed speech and language skills. At the end of Reception Year, local children's skills are close to the national average and the gap is narrowing between the lowest achievers and other children.
- Courses devoted to healthy eating and living are having a positive impact. Immunisation rates are above national averages, and obesity levels in young children are reducing year on year, as is the incidence of smoking. Those mothers who attend the 'Breastfriends' group speak highly of the difference made by the timely breastfeeding support provided by staff and parent volunteers. However, too few mothers throughout the local area initiate breastfeeding or sustain it for at least six to eight weeks.
- The centre places children's safety high among its priorities at all times. Staff, volunteers and parents all understand its importance and act accordingly. Staff's well-completed files, relating to those whom they support intensively, clearly record close, effective working between different agencies. Other professionals see centre staff as 'the linchpin' which leads to 'much less crisis and much earlier intervention'.
- Centre staff excel at enabling adults with a diverse range of skills and experiences to grow in self-confidence, enhance their life skills and move towards a bright future for themselves and their children. Volunteering, with training shared by the two centres, plays a large part in this. It augments the centre's services, such as running 'Messy Mondays', and also extends individuals' experience. 'I am now working in a role that I absolutely love, all because of centre staff's vision and support,' is typical of users' comments. Tellingly, almost all those spoken with also outlined the increased involvement that they now have in their children's learning and enjoyment.

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

Good

- Well-established arrangements for governance, leadership and management ensure that all those connected with the centre's activities share a clarity of vision and determination to do the best for local families. There is a purposeful rationale for each service and reflective evaluation of its impact. An impressive tracking system records the progress of those families identified as in most need of support. Resources are used well to meet the needs of local families, especially those who are in the most need of support.
- The local authority monitors the centre's performance regularly. It both supports the centre effectively and challenges it to improve. The headteacher, as centre leader, is highly influential in the centre's development. Advisory board members, who have a broad range of experience, are knowledgeable about the community's needs and the quality of the centre's staff and services and how well performance is managed. Their suggestions led to the establishment of the 'Grandparents and Grandbuddies' group. Together, those in governance are clear about the strengths of the centre's provision, its comparative performance and how successfully it is reducing inequalities.
- Data about the centre's performance are available and understood by those in governance positions,

but they are not always in an easily accessible or sufficiently detailed form. This sometimes reduces the precision with which leaders at all levels can evaluate the centre's overall effectiveness formally.

- Policies, procedures, training and practice relating to safeguarding are thorough and deeply embedded in all of the centre's work. Families supported through early help assessments, children in need, or looked after by the local authority, or subject to a child protection plan are supported through well-coordinated and effective partnerships.
- Parents' views play a strong role in the centre's work. The energetic and creative parents' forum galvanises local support and enhances the centre's provision. A current project is to raise funds to help finance the provision of home safety equipment, now that this service is no longer available through public funding. Parents are unanimous in expressing their grateful appreciation of the difference that the centre makes to their lives. Many talk eagerly about their hopes for the future whereas, 'before there was nothing.'

**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**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	20876
<b>Local authority</b>	Leeds
<b>Inspection number</b>	447571
<b>Managed by</b>	The local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	752
<b>Centre manager</b>	Helen Linton
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	0113 264 3455
<b>Email address</b>	helen.linton@crossgates.leeds.sch.uk

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