

Swarcliffe Children's Centre

Langbar Road, Swarcliffe, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS14 5ER

Inspection dates	20–21 May 2015
Previous inspection date	Not previously inspected

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	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.

- Leaders, managers, and governance, including the local authority, are ambitious for the centre and are driving further improvement to the already good quality of practice and services. Leaders say, 'We do not give up on any family'. The centre's successful performance shows that there is good capacity for further improvement.
- Members of the advisory board, known as 'Your Voice', are knowledgeable and hold the centre leaders to account well. The views of parents and children are heard and actioned where possible.
- The vast majority of children under five in the reach are known to the centre due to the successful sharing of information across the Early Start team. Most families that leaders identify as in most need of the centre's support engage regularly with the services it offers.
- All three-and-four-year-old children take up their funded early education places, along with most two-year-olds.
- Work designed to improve children's readiness for school is having a positive impact.
- The highest quality of partnership work is at the heart of the centre's success. Good collaborative practice exists with Cross Gates and Manston Children's Centre and parents are happy to access the good quality services at either setting.
- Parents are fulsome in their praise of the support they receive from centre staff. They are quite certain that their lives are improved enormously by the presence of the centre in the community. They typically comment, 'You can always find someone to talk to here.'

It is not outstanding because:

- Initial levels of breastfeeding and levels of breastfeeding sustained at six to eight weeks after birth are too low.
- Too large a proportion of mothers still smoke during pregnancy.
- Leaders do not use the plentiful data they collect about different aspects of the centre's performance as effectively as possible to inform their evaluation of its effectiveness.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- In partnership with health colleagues:
 - increase significantly the proportion of mothers who initiate breastfeeding and continue to breastfeed their babies for at least six to eight weeks
 - reduce the proportion of mothers who smoke during pregnancy.
- 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 one other children's centre, Crossgates and Manston Children's Centre, with which it works in collaboration.

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with senior leaders, representatives from the local authority, members of staff and partner professionals from other agencies. They also held discussions with centre staff, members of the advisory board and a number of parents.

The inspectors visited activities that took place at the centre, Cross Gates and Manston Children's Centre and Whinmoor Library.

They observed the centre's work, looked at a range of relevant documentation and undertook a 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

Jane Hughes, Lead inspector
Sarah Drake
Judith Elderfield

Additional inspector
Additional inspector
Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Swarcliffe Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre. The centre works in collaboration with Crossgates and Manston Children's Centre. The centres jointly coordinate a number of services such as health, family support, adult learning, support networks, training and also family and holiday activities. Governance is provided by the local authority and an advisory board, 'Your Voice', which comprises a range of professional partners and parents.

There are approximately 1127 children aged under five living locally. The centre covers a diverse area with levels of deprivation, ranging from highly disadvantaged to relatively affluent covering the areas of Swarcliffe and Whinmoor. Approximately three quarters of children live in areas identified as among the 30% most disadvantaged nationally. Most families are White British, with a small but growing proportion from Black Minority ethnic groups.

Children's skills on entry to early years provision are generally below those typical for their age. The centre has identified those families most in need of support as: teenage parents with additional needs; children with poor levels of communication and speech delay; children living in workless households; lone parents with additional needs.

The centre offers a range of services, including activities to support children's and adults' learning. It delivers some activities at the local library. There is on-site childcare provision, Swarcliffe Children's Centre Daycare. This is subject to separate inspection arrangements. Reports for this setting can be found at www.gov.uk/ofsted.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Outstanding

- Most families, including all who are most in need of support, register with the centre and have access to good quality services. Staff ensure that teenage parents with additional needs, lone parents with additional needs, children living in workless families and children who have speech and language delay receive the range and type of support most appropriate to their needs.
- Effective information-sharing across the Early Start team ensures that the very large majority of families in most need of help, or who may be less likely to seek support automatically, engage with centre services. The centre has good access to live birth data and health partners ensure that staff are aware of expectant parents within the reach area. Along with bi-weekly guidance and support meetings, these systems ensure that families receive support when their needs are greatest.
- All three- and- four-year-old children take up their free entitlement to early education places, along with the large majority of two year olds. This prepares children well for school.
- Centre staff establish especially high quality relationships with partners from schools, health, and social care organisations. As a result, there is excellent information-sharing. Use of referrals between staff and partner organisations is highly effective in removing families from isolation.
- Regular baby clinics offer new parents the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the warmly welcoming centre. They meet other new parents and see at first hand what the centre offers through support, friendship and new opportunities.
- High quality outreach work is very effective in supporting families in the groups hardest to reach, so that they wish to return to participate in activities. Family outreach workers build successful relationships with centre users through home visits. They also use community venues to advertise the centre's work and to provide services to attract more users, such as 'Story and Rhyme Time'

sessions at the local library. These engage children through fun activities and plentiful, colourful resources.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- There is a collaborative approach across the Early Start team, which includes peer support, baby groups facilitated by trained practitioners, and well-baby clinic. Good quality and relevant provision is available to all families as well as for those with particular needs, and this improves children's well-being and the lives of families. For instance, activities such as 'Baby Massage' improve emotional bonds between parents and their baby while 'Let's Cook encourages families to think more carefully about healthy eating.
- Almost all children and babies in the reach are immunised. The proportion of Reception-age children who are obese is below the national average. Centre staff recognise that too few mothers either initiate breastfeeding or continue to breastfeed their babies beyond six to eight weeks.
- 'Preparation for Birth and Beyond' supports any first-time parents well. The centre offers a smoking cessation clinic. The gap between the prevalence of smoking for Leeds and the reach area has fallen to 7.5% in 2014. Even so, the proportion of mothers who smoke at delivery is above the national figure by just over 2%.
- Parents recognise that staff provide the information they need to make the right choices for their children's future. For instance, parents recognise the success of the 'dummy challenge' as the centre focuses on improving children's speech and language. Parents learn why it is important for children's clear speech not to use dummies. One agreed that her child's communication was much improved because, 'they made me get rid of the dummy...I needed the push.'
- Childminders receive high quality support and access to professional training and expertise to ensure that they improve their provision. This includes a weekly support group, half-termly evening network meetings and training. As a result, most childminders linked to either centre in the collaboration provide good or better provision that prepares children well for school.
- The proportion of children across the reach who achieved a good level of development at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2014 was just above the national average and is rising. Inequalities are reducing over time, as the gender gap and the gap in achievement for disadvantaged children continue to close.
- Family learning programmes focus on local priorities of communication, literacy and mathematics. Most children who attend with their parents make good progress from their starting points. They learn to eat healthily and to speak more clearly. Families benefit from universal home safety checks and some from free safety equipment.
- Families overcome barriers and improve their life chances because they receive outstanding care and support. These make a profound difference to families' social, emotional and economic well-being and reduce inequalities. Typical comments from parents include: 'Without the centre, I wouldn't be on the way up as I am now.
- The centre works very well with other partners to provide effective adult learning courses. These are reducing worklessness and enabling more parents to engage in education, employment and training. 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 extends individuals' experience. Almost all those spoken with also outlined the increased involvement that they now have in their children's learning and enjoyment. Volunteers thrive on the chance to give back some of the support they experienced in a time of crisis.

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

- The advisory board, named 'Your Voice' by parents 'because that is what we are', provides effective governance. Parents and partners are represented well and their voice is heard when decisions are made. They are very clear about the centre's priorities to reduce inequalities for local children and families. Members are knowledgeable about the centre and speak passionately about the good quality of practice and services. They demonstrate a clear confidence to challenge outcomes and management decisions as critical friends, including the management of staff performance. Members know how effective the centre is in closing the gap in achievement between different groups.
- 'Your Voice' members are familiar with the detail, including data, contained within the local authority's reviews of the centre's performance. They understand well the needs of the groups identified as most in need of support. Members ensure that the centre provides good value for money, using all available resources effectively and ensuring that these are spent wisely to meet families' needs and reduce inequalities.
- Leaders understand most of the centre's strengths and priorities for development. They collate a wide variety of information about the centre's performance. However, they do not always use these data well enough to inform their formal evaluation of the impact of the centre's work.
- The local authority gives effective challenge and support to the centre in its work to reduce inequalities. It shows its ambition for the centre to improve still further and so progress from good to outstanding.
- Good quality resources engage children well in their learning and play. Resources are used appropriately to meet the needs of those children and families who access centre services. Staff are deployed well to develop the skills of parents and children and so improve their life chances. Staff are appropriately qualified and are drawn from a range of professional backgrounds.
- Safeguarding is effective. Staff are vetted carefully and training is updated regularly. Record-keeping is meticulous. Professional supervision is detailed and regular. Performance and training are managed particularly well so staff feel highly valued. Partner agencies confirm that they can rely totally on centre staff to provide appropriate support to families they refer to the centre.
- Daily information-sharing ensures that workloads are balanced and duplication of services avoided. Agencies collaborate well and work is monitored closely to ensure the best possible outcomes for families.
- Case files document outcomes and on-going support for children in need, those supported with a child protection plan, looked after children and families supported through early help assessments. Staff ensure that these groups do as well as others who access centre services, because centre staff work constantly well to reduce inequalities. Staff empower families to become increasingly resourceful and independent. Families most in need of help receive expert support to help them to overcome barriers to success. As a result, they flourish.
- Parents appreciate the friendly environment. Families in crisis are supported by the centre and other organisations with basic household items, such as furniture and equipment to make their lives safer and easier. The centre is valued and respected by the local community and satisfaction rates from families are very high.

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	23088
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	447572
Managed by	The local authority
Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1,127
Centre leader	Meryl Paige
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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