

# Mirfield Children's Centre

14, Taylor Hall Lane, Mirfield, West Yorkshire, WF14 0HW

|                                 |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <b>Inspection dates</b>         | Not previously inspected |
| <b>Previous inspection date</b> | 10–11 June 2015          |

| <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          |                         | <b>Good</b>              | <b>2</b> |
| The quality of practice and services                       |                         | <b>Good</b>              | <b>2</b> |
| The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management |                         | <b>Outstanding</b>       | <b>1</b> |

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This is a good centre.

- Leaders, managers and governance are outstanding. Despite financial restrictions which have led to limited opening hours, they have sustained the good quality of practice and services for centre users and assured the good overall performance of the centre. There is excellent capacity for further improvement.
- Action for Children, in partnership with the local authority, provides very strong direction, high expectations and consistent challenge to the centre in improving the lives of local families.
- All staff are proud of the work they achieve and are highly ambitious for families in most need of support in the area. As a result, the overall effectiveness of the centre is good and still improving rapidly to ensure strong outcomes for families.
- Registrations are high and a very large majority of families the centre has identified as in most need of its services and support regularly access services.
- Partnership work is exemplary. Health professionals are fulsome in their praise for the centre. The centre manager, as the local childcare coordinator, supports high quality early years practice found in the very large majority of local early years settings and schools.
- Adults benefit from a broad range of effective adult learning courses and opportunities to volunteer. These enable more parents to achieve good outcomes in education, training and gaining employment.
- Care, guidance and support are high quality. Safeguarding children and adults is a vital part of the centre's work.
- Parents play a full part in the running of the centre through the active family forum and the challenging advisory board. They are delighted with the support offered by the centre. They typically comment: 'It would be like cutting off my arm if the centre was not here.'

### It is not outstanding because:

- Despite rapid improvements, early years outcomes by the end of Reception Year in the most disadvantaged area are still below the national average, especially children's communication, language and social skills, and particularly those of boys.
- Although there is active promotion of breastfeeding with health colleagues, rates of sustained breastfeeding at six-to-eight weeks are below the national average.

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

- Build on existing work with partners to ensure that early years provision sustains the rapid improvement of early years outcomes in the most disadvantaged area by the end of Reception Year, especially in children's communication, language and social skills, and particularly for boys.
- In partnership with health colleagues, continue to increase the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their babies at six-to-eight weeks.

**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 the centre manager and members of staff as well as representatives from the local authority and Action For Children, representatives from health and education, and partner professionals from other agencies. They also held discussions with members of the advisory board, including the Chair who is also headteacher of the adjacent primary school. Inspectors spoke to parents at different times during the inspection and met some volunteers. The lead inspector and the centre manager carried out a joint observation of an activity in the centre.

The inspectors visited St Andrews Methodist Church Hall and Old Bank Junior Infant & Nursery School.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including self-evaluation and action plans, safeguarding policies, and a sample of case files.

**Inspection team**

Jane Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Qaisra Shahraz Ahmad

Additional inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

Mirfield is a stand-alone centre, adjacent to Old Bank Junior, Infant and Nursery School. Opening hours are restricted to Wednesdays and Thursdays, 9am to 4pm and Fridays, 9am to 12.30pm. Action for Children is commissioned to deliver children's centre services on behalf of Kirklees council. The advisory board, which provides governance, comprises a range of professional partners and parents.

There are approximately 990 children aged under five years living locally. Mirfield overall is deemed an affluent area but with some areas of significant disadvantage. Most families are White British. Housing in the immediate area is mostly terraced or social. Just under 16% of children under five live in families dependent on workless benefits, rising to almost 42% in the most disadvantaged areas. Children's skills on entry to early education are generally typical for their age, although weaker in the most disadvantaged areas. Of the working age population, 13% have no or low qualifications, rising to 36% in the most disadvantaged area.

The centre has identified those most in need of its services as: families with children aged nought to four years in the most disadvantaged area; parents with low grade or no qualifications; workless households; families participating in the Stronger Families project; families with children expected to attend Old Bank Junior, Infant and Nursery School.

The centre provides a range of services including drop-in sessions, health services, family support, outreach, parenting and adult learning opportunities. It delivers some services at St Andrew's Methodist Church Hall.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

**Good**

- Regular referrals from partners, particularly health, ensure that the centre registers the very large majority of families in the reach. Family support and other outreach work is highly effective in supporting families in the groups identified by the centre as in most need of its services, including expectant parents. These families grow in confidence and most participate in activities either run by the centre or signposted by staff. Many families are helped to move out of crisis situations.
- The centre has focused its efforts on making certain that those most in need of support, including those who are less likely to participate, are able to access the centre's services. This has led to increasing engagement of families with children aged nought to four years who live in the most disadvantaged area, parents with no or low grade qualifications, families in workless households, families who are part of the Stronger Families project and families whose children are expected to attend Old Bank Junior, Infant and Nursery School. As a result of their regular access to centre services, they are better able to overcome barriers to success and to improve their future life chances.
- Drop-in sessions are held weekly at the One Stop Shop at the local church hall. The hall's greater capacity enables a higher volume of users' needs to be met. These sessions are particularly effective in attracting families from across the reach who are searching for advice from health visitors, breastfeeding peer supporters and other agencies. Families speak very highly of the support they receive at these sessions. They say it has transformed their lives, helped to develop their confidence, self-esteem and improved their parenting skills.
- The very large majority of three- and four-year-olds and the large majority of eligible two-year-olds access their funded early education place in the range of good and better early years provision in the area. The centre manager has a dual role. As area childcare coordinator, she promotes the two year old funded childcare offer to eligible parents and uptake continues to rise. Access to these places is helping children to be better prepared for nursery and school.

**The quality of practice and services****Good**

- Families are highly satisfied with the good quality and range of services, as reflected in the centre's satisfaction surveys. These services meet the needs of all families with the area and includes some open to all and others directed at families who require more specific support. Parents say how much they appreciate the good support from centre staff. This support helps parents to be part of the local community, meet new friends and break down the barriers stemming from isolation and depression.
- The centre provides a good range of information for families on all aspects of care. Displays and posters provided inside and outside the centre signpost families to a wide range of services. Parenting programmes such as Family Links provide stimulating resources and a variety of activities. These lead to great enjoyment, regular involvement and excellent learning. One parent stated: 'This has helped me to be a better mum for my children.' The free crèche provision enables parents to participate more easily in such courses.
- Unemployed adults have good access to advice, guidance, education, training and volunteering opportunities to help them get back to work. For instance, employability support through specialist advisors and appointments with Citizens Advice Bureau enable users to write CVs, practise for interviews and fill in job applications. Case studies clearly demonstrate how the good support from the centre has helped families identified as in most need of help to improve their lives and well-being and so reduce inequalities.
- There are excellent recording systems, including learner journals of families among those most in need of support. Parents enjoy their active involvement in self-assessment as, for example, they complete their participation booklet records and agree to improvement targets. Assessment and monitoring of progress are both highly effective.
- Children living in the centre's reach area attain higher than national and local levels at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. There is an improving trend overall and the gap in achievement is closing rapidly. Specific programmes such as Child's Journey and Nearly@Nursery help parents in the most disadvantaged area to prepare their children for nursery and school. A significantly larger proportion of children, 49%, who followed one of these two specific programmes achieved a good level of development at Old Bank Junior, Infant and Nursery School by the end of Reception in 2015.
- There remains an ongoing key focus in the most disadvantaged area of the reach. This is to improve further children's communication, language and social skills and, in particular, those of boys as these are still below average.
- Through close partnership with health services the centre helps to promote the benefits of healthy lifestyles and improve health outcomes for families. The proportion of Reception-age children who are obese is below the national average. Immunisation clinics are held twice weekly at the centre and take up is high. Various professional partners gather to share expertise at One Stop Shop sessions. Even so, the centre has not been entirely successful in improving health outcomes relating to sustained breastfeeding rates at six-to-eight weeks which are below average.
- Midwives hold weekly clinics at the centre where parents access antenatal and postnatal support. The midwives appreciate the calm atmosphere at the clinic, saying: 'As a health professional, I know I can sit in that room and give a woman the time she needs.'

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

- Leaders at every level are constantly driving for improvement, and to move the centre to outstanding overall, even with diminishing resources. Despite working with a small staff team, a small budget, and a small building, and opening for two-and-a-half days a week, almost all activities continue to run. Such positive outcomes are the result of careful planning and seamless teamwork that has allowed the very best use to be made of the available resources. Within the most disadvantaged area of the reach, engagement is rising, children's readiness for school is improving, and so inequalities are reducing even in the most testing of times.

- There is impressive evidence of the impact of the centre in reducing inequalities and in improving over time the lives of those families most in need of support. There is positive celebration of diversity through displays, resources and activities relating to languages and world festivals.
- The highest quality partnership work, including excellent relationships with the adjacent primary school, help keep families safe and help them develop skills for better lives for themselves and their children.
- Safeguarding arrangements are robust and staff take their duties relating to safeguarding very seriously. Safeguarding has the highest priority. Family case files are maintained to a high standard. These records demonstrate that the centre's involvement helps to improve outcomes for families and children in a number of ways. For instance, they show improvements in parenting skills, in mental health and in the safety of families. Family support is highly effective in building resilience rather than dependency among local families and centre users.
- The centre works in highly effective partnership with social care to meet the needs of a small number of children subject to child protection plans. There is a close focus on security and online safety. Staff use the Early Help Assessment process very well to reduce levels of risk. There is high quality support for looked after children and their carers as well as children who have been identified as in need.
- The centre manager provides stalwart leadership for all centre staff who work diligently to support local families. Staff receive regular supervision and their performance is valued highly. They feel very well supported. They access high quality training which enables them to respond professionally to the challenge that their work presents. For example, they are training to support a much wider age range of children and young people.
- Leaders, governors and managers took the centre's reduction in opening hours in their stride. They are highly adept at collecting, collating and coordinating a wide body of knowledge about local families, the ever-increasing skills of staff and those offered by professional partners. They use this information daily to meet effectively the needs of children, families, adults and staff. They strive for excellence in all they do, within the resources at their disposal.
- The local authority and Action for Children check the centre's performance regularly. They are ambitious for local families and provide ever-increasing challenges to improve the centre's overall performance still further. Self-evaluation is meticulous and an ongoing improvement tool that is always to hand. Information sharing is exemplary within the centre and also, when appropriate, between other agencies.
- Leaders and governance have an excellent overview of the centre's strengths and where development is needed. The advisory board contains a good mix of committed professional partners and representatives from the local community, including parents. Board members receive all the necessary information to provide excellent challenge to the centre. They play a central part in its continued improvement and success. They know the centre is doing well in terms of its quality of practice and services and are knowledgeable about how the performance of staff is managed. They pay close attention to how well centre services are closing any gaps and reducing inequalities for children and families.

**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**

|                                |                                                      |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Unique reference number</b> | 22027                                                |
| <b>Local authority</b>         | Kirklees                                             |
| <b>Inspection number</b>       | 455057                                               |
| <b>Managed by</b>              | Action For Children on behalf of the local authority |

|                                                                    |                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b> | 990                                                                              |
| <b>Centre leader</b>                                               | Gillian Haigh                                                                    |
| <b>Date of previous inspection</b>                                 | Not previously inspected                                                         |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                                            | 01924 326622                                                                     |
| <b>Email address</b>                                               | <a href="mailto:gillian.haigh@kirklees.gov.uk">gillian.haigh@kirklees.gov.uk</a> |

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