

Woodhouse Close Children's Centre

Walker Drive, Woodhouse Close Estate, Bishop Auckland, DL14 6QL

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| Inspection dates | 9–10 July 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 | | Good | 2 |
| 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:

- Leadership, management and governance arrangements are clear. The management team and the dedicated, enthusiastic staff team work very well together. Leaders have good capacity to improve because they know what they do well and where further work is required.
- Well-established, close work, particularly with health professionals, means that all those expecting babies are known. A good range of services are delivered in families' homes, or out in several community venues that families can get to easily. As a result, a large majority of families, including most of those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, access and benefit from the centre's good quality services.
- Safeguarding practice is well established. All partners work very well together to assess the needs of children and their families early, to prevent difficult situations escalating. Their prime aim is to use their good knowledge of families to keep children safe. They also strive to improve their well-being through the provision and delivery of a range of relevant services and high-quality family support.
- Children are well supported to enjoy their play and to learn. Very close partnership work with schools and childcare providers has a positive impact on children and on the sharing of their good progress. Consequently, the achievement gap for children is closing considerably.
- A strong drive has increased adult learning and volunteering opportunities. Adults benefit from developing their skills and knowledge through good creative opportunities that capture their interests well. Volunteers actively support the centre's work.

It is not outstanding because:

- There are insufficient places for eligible two-year-olds to access free nursery education places in the St Helen's area.
- Too many mothers smoke during pregnancy and too few choose to breastfeed their babies. In addition, a high number of children enter school overweight, particularly in the Coundon area.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Work with schools and childcare providers to develop sufficient nursery places for eligible two-year-olds, particularly in the St Helen's area.
- Continue to work closely with health partners to:
 - reduce the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy
 - convince more mothers of the benefits of breastfeeding
 - decrease the percentage of young children entering school overweight, particularly in Coundon.

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 the children's centre leader, the locality manager and early years advisor. They met representatives from the local authority, 'One Point Services', the local advisory board, parents' forum, key partners, staff and parents.

Inspectors visited the 'One Point Services' hub, the 'Craft Club' and a traveller site. All inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's activity plans, self-evaluation, improvement plan, data and a selection of family case files. One inspector conducted a joint observation of 'Interactive Play' with the early years advisor.

Inspection team

Sue Pepper, Lead inspector

Additional inspector

Philip David Ellwand

Additional inspector

Eileen Grimes

Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Woodhouse Close Children's Centre is a single centre which covers the areas of Bishop Auckland, Woodhouse Close, Coundon, St Helen's and West Auckland in County Durham. The centre delivers family support, health and some child and adult learning services from the centre and outreach venues across the community.

Yellow Wellies Day Nursery, the linked childcare provision, is subject to separate inspection arrangements and this information is available on the Ofsted website: www.gov.uk/ofsted.

The majority of families are of White British heritage with an increasing number of Eastern Europeans moving into the area, where there are two established Gypsy Roma Traveller sites. There are approximately 1,942 children under five years of age living in the community. The majority of children enter early years provision with skills and knowledge well below those typical for their age.

The centre is managed by the local authority, supported by a local advisory board. A 'One Point' locality manager and a children's centre leader are responsible for the day-to-day running and development of the centre's services.

A large majority of families live in areas ranked among the 30% most deprived nationally. Data shows that the number of children living in workless households is high and 18% are dependent on state benefits. The centre has identified children living in the most disadvantaged areas, disabled children, teenage parents, families of Eastern European origin and the Gypsy Roma Traveller communities as most in need of its support.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Good

- Close relationships and very strong partnerships are in place with health professionals. They assess family needs extremely well to make sure that those who need additional support receive it. As a result, most of those expecting babies are regularly seen at clinics or in their own homes.
- The centre was described by a partner as being, 'at the heart of the community'. The centre is co-located with Yellow Wellies childcare provision and close to the 'One Point Services' hub. This helps to create a warm, friendly welcome, and excellent relationships underpin the delivery of an exciting programme of services that a large majority of families with young children access. The centre successfully promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination.
- Support for teenage parents and disabled children is very good. Specific support groups have been created to meet their individual needs very well. For example, teenage parents enjoy attending a programme of planned events to meet their individual needs, and disabled children have the good support of the 'Footprints' portage group.
- Excellent partnership work to promote 'Stronger Families' ensures that the centre identifies those whose circumstances make them disadvantaged and who are less likely to use the centre services. A volunteer who is Polish is helping the centre staff to realise better how they can effectively support more families from Eastern Europe. Very good relationships with those families living in the Gypsy Roma Traveller sites enable the centre staff to appreciate and better value different cultures so that they are in a stronger position to meet their needs.
- A range of activities, such as 'Terrific Twos', is open to all families to help promote young children's good development, especially their communication and language skills. Very close partnership work with schools and childcare providers ensures that a high number of three- and four-year-olds access nursery places and a clear drive is in place to increase the take-up of two-

year-old places. However, despite increasing in number, there are still too few places available in the St Helen's area.

- Good partnerships and understanding of learners' needs have led to extended adult learning provision. Adults have good access to a good range of appropriate courses, some of which have led to further training and good volunteering opportunities in the centre or out in the community. As a result of this flexible and responsive approach, staff have greatly improved the take-up and success rates of adult learners who most need the centre's support.

The quality of practice and services

Good

- The centre has been recognised, through achievements of specific awards, for its integrated, appropriate approach with partners to promote healthier lifestyles. However, the number of mothers smoking in pregnancy is high and this is resulting in some low birth weight babies. Mothers who choose to breastfeed are well supported but, due to a bottle feeding culture, the percentage of mothers who choose to breastfeed their babies remains stubbornly low.
- The number of children who enter school overweight is very high in the Coundon area. Families have good opportunities to become more physically active if they are willing to do so. Some parents learn how to cook healthy foods on a budget rather than living on convenience foods, which has a positive impact on their family's well-being.
- Children who access the early funded, high-quality nursery places make rapid progress through good support to develop their independence and communication. The 'Again, Again' project results in parents telling familiar stories to their children over and over again, which both enjoy and which helps children's understanding of language. Children who need specific support to aid their speech and language development have the advantage of good support from the 'Early Language Group'.
- A consistent, integrated approach to supporting children's transition from home to the centre, childcare providers and schools is having a very positive impact. The gap in children's achievements is well below the national average, reducing inequalities. In addition, recent data indicates that the percentage of children who achieve a good level of development at the end of the Reception year is in line with national average.
- A good range of parenting courses improve adults' confidence, self-esteem and parenting skills well. Parents quickly learn how to improve their family routines, manage children's behaviour positively and improve their well-being and lives. This results in many adults being interested in working as a volunteer and, as one parent, typical of many, stated, 'a happier me looking forward to a brighter future'.
- Good partnership working with adult education providers leads to many achieving accreditation in English and Mathematics. Lower level learners who might be less likely to engage in formal adult learning enjoy attending a range of craft initiatives and innovative creative opportunities, such as attendance at the 'Craft Club', self-defence and 'Chocomaths', to develop their skills. A nurturing drive, very good personalised support and success in progression on to further courses often act as stepping stones towards employability.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Good

- The local authority has undergone a significant restructure of children centres, and meetings at a strategic level are planned to further improve integrated working, particularly with health and social care partners. Strong governance, leadership and management arrangements are in place. Good knowledge of families living in the community and improved data aid accurate self-evaluation and plans for the future to reduce inequalities for families.
- The experienced centre leader and locality manager work very well together with the passionate staff team to mutually support one another and meet set targets. The well-established local advisory board and the local authority effectively challenge leaders to continually reflect on their practice, the quality of provision and the centre's impact on families. The centre has developed a good reputation due to building trusting relationships with parents and excellent communication and sharing of expertise with professional partners.

- Robust performance management arrangements and quality assurance monitoring of staff's work are evident. Individual contributions are valued and leaders recognise when further training is required to enhance the delivery of new services. In addition, swift allocation of family case files and good tracking of children's progress are very effective.
- Joint staff training and working with partner agencies are cost-effective and further strengthen very good partnerships. Reduced financial resources are managed effectively by working closely with other children's centres. Additional funds have been successfully secured to enhance 'Family First' multi-agency working to further tackle inequalities.
- Good safeguarding arrangements underpin the centre's work. Family case files are maintained to a high standard. The needs of looked after children and those subject to a child protection plan are well met through early help and the 'team around the child' approach. Swift response, coordinating early support, prevents difficult situations escalating into a crisis.
- The centre is very responsive to users' views and to capturing the child's voice. A parents' forum is well established and very good support is in place for volunteers who actively develop initiatives and extend the range of services available for families. A play bus is available for families and used to deliver some services to families and, as a result, parents demonstrate high levels of satisfaction with the good quality services provided by the centre.

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

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| Unique reference number | 23652 |
| Local authority | Durham |
| Inspection number | 464724 |
| Managed by | The local authority |
| Approximate number of children under five in the reach area | 1,942 |
| Centre leader | Judith Bowman |
| Date of previous inspection | Not previously inspected |
| Telephone number | 03000 261119 |
| Email address | judith.bowman@durham.gov.uk |

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