

Inspection report for Airedale children's centre

Local authority	Wakefield
Inspection number	361070
Inspection dates	23–24 June 2010
Reporting inspector	Liam Trippier HMI

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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Airedale Neighbourhood Nursery
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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by two of Her Majesty's Inspectors. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, members of the Partnership Board, a range of providers, parents, users and the local authority officers linked to the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at sessions in operation in the children's centre and in nearby locations. They also looked at a range of documentation including the centre's operational plans, evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the centre's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- the effectiveness of data and case studies to inform analysis and decision making that impact positively on the provision
- the effectiveness of partnerships to meet the needs of users
- the effectiveness of local authority support and challenge for the centre
- the impact of leadership and management on the provision and outcomes for users.

Information about the centre

Airedale Children's centre is located in two sites on a large housing estate in Wakefield. It has been working towards providing the full core offer for children's centres in areas with the highest levels of deprivation since 2006. Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding unemployment, youth crime and substance misuse and low levels of literacy and numeracy. The predominant cultural group is White British. The centre has a manager and there are strong links with the local authority for monitoring and supervision of the provision.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with a Partnership Board and includes providers, members of the local community and users that attend the children's centre. There is a range of health, social care, family

support and education services operating from the centre with associated professionals and centre staff. There are links to local primary schools.

Childcare is provided through daily 'Stay and Play' and regular crèche sessions held at the children's centre and at the children's centre nursery which were all visited as part of this inspection. The Ofsted report for the Airedale Neighbourhood Nursery from March 2009 judged the childcare provision as good and was taken into account for this inspection. This report can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

<p>Overall effectiveness The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community</p>	2
<p>Capacity for sustained improvement The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management</p>	2

Main findings

Airedale children’s centre provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for all its users. They appreciate the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. A typical view expressed by a user is ‘The centre is a safe and good place to be’.

A key strength of the centre is the good leadership provided by the centre manager and her management team in strong partnership with the local authority. Leaders lead by example and set high standards for others to follow. All appropriate policies and procedures are in place and up to date. Safeguarding and equality procedures are good. Users’ views are heard through the centre’s effective Parents’ Forum and they play an increasingly important role in the running of the centre. The Partnership Board, local authority and Parents’ Forum support and challenge the centre to provide better outcomes for its users.

Within the last two years the centre has effectively doubled the number of users it reaches, particularly those who are hard to reach. This has been through a concerted and effective approach to promote the centre’s services and benefits to local families. It has rightly resulted in the centre being considered a hub of the community by many users and services.

Observations by inspectors, data scrutinised, evaluations conducted by the centre and case studies demonstrate that most outcomes for users are good. The provision is also good. It is strongest when the centre uses the expertise of professionals to influence their work above and beyond what is expected and when information from course evaluations and data is used effectively.

The centre correctly identifies that self-evaluation procedures are satisfactory. Data is used to identify users’ needs and the centre’s priorities well. However, action plans are not consistently evaluated in sufficient detail using assessment and feedback information which the centre routinely collects from course evaluations. The centre’s

effective use of data is developing but this information is not always readily available from all services or providers. This limits the effectiveness of managers to precisely identify areas for future development.

Partnership working is developing steadily and the centre works hard to develop links with relevant services. Links with health services are developing more slowly than in other areas. Some health services work effectively in partnership with the children's centre and communicate findings readily. However, this is not consistent at the moment and sometimes a lack of information and slow communication reduces the centre's effectiveness for fine tuning services to meet users' needs quickly.

Action to overcome gaps in provision and improve outcomes has been effective. Leaders are pro-active and have ensured that any areas identified as weaknesses have been addressed and negotiations have successfully engaged partners to develop their work. Leaders have correctly identified that self-evaluation can be improved and now know how to work in close partnership with a range of health services to ensure they receive detailed information from all health providers.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Further improve outcomes and provision by:
 - improving the effectiveness of self-evaluation through the regular and rigorous analysis of information and data from monitoring activities
 - developing health partnerships further so that they provide the best possible range of integrated services and regular, timely and detailed information to the children's centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Increasing numbers of users access the services provided by the centre and take up rates are high. All groups that attend the centre, from a variety of backgrounds, work harmoniously together. The centre effectively addresses users' feelings of isolation and provides good opportunities for families to engage in a range of services and develop strong friendships. A typical view is that 'there are people you would never see or meet if you didn't come here'. Users report that their confidence and self-esteem has improved since attending the centre.

Good quality information is provided to all families to improve outcomes at the centre. For example, parents report that they have developed a better understanding of early years education through good quality family learning opportunities. A wide range of literature and personalised help and support from centre staff is always available.

Users report that some health providers are very effective. They provide useful information and signpost families to appropriate services to improve their lives.

However, this approach is not fully effective or consistent across all health services at the centre. For example, despite the hard work of centre staff to promote healthy lifestyles through weaning demonstrations and healthy cooking courses, parents do not always follow the guidance they receive to impact positively on their family's health.

All services offered in the centre keep users safe. The centre's good quality relationships with families and their children allow staff to identify any safety concerns within families and intervene appropriately. Case study evidence and discussions with parents provide strong evidence that access to a good quality behaviour management course with strong support from sensitive centre staff improved relationships, behaviour and home safety for users with their children.

Children are well prepared for nursery and mainstream school due to the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage both at the neighbourhood nursery and at Airedale Centre. Children are provided with good quality learning experiences and this impacts positively on their learning and development. A suitable programme to improve children's speaking and listening skills has effectively identified those who require additional speech and language support. Educational courses for adults are good quality with high success rates which improve levels of literacy and numeracy for those who engage in the programmes.

Behaviour in both settings is good. The centre staff successfully promote a sense of belonging and respect that users appreciate. As a result, users and staff enjoy their time spent in the centre. Play sessions successfully engage parents and carers by involving them in the running of the groups. For example, parents play an active role in the activities with their children and they are encouraged to suggest ideas for future activity plans. Several parents have been recruited to the parent forum and participate with confidence.

Users benefit from the strong partnership with Jobcentre Plus and the children's centre. They are effectively signposted to relevant information and guidance that is tailored to their needs and circumstances. As a result, many users develop good and relevant skills and qualifications to equip them for the world of work and improve their life chances.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and	2

governance of the centre	
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

Most outreach services are very effective in meeting the needs of the wider community. Some concerns were raised by users with regards to a few areas of health provision and the centre is aware of these concerns. Good partnerships are developing with social care. A reciprocal arrangement to effectively support families in crisis and for those who require referral to family support services has been organised recently. Sessions and courses observed by inspectors in the centre were generally of good quality with purposeful learning observed. For example, the 'Bumps and Babies' group provides exciting and stimulating opportunities for many parents and their babies to enjoy quality time together. The babies explore in a safe and nurturing environment and parents are provided with good quality advice and support from a range of professionals.

Users can see the relevance of training and attendance at sessions to improving outcomes in their lives. However, attendance at breastfeeding groups can fluctuate and the centre recognises they have more work to do here to attract more users, link other services together and meet the challenging targets set.

Assessments of users' needs by the centre, ensures skills are developed well and that provision is appropriately matched to improve outcomes. Good assessment in 'Stay and Play' sessions focuses well on children's needs and ensures their activities are interesting and relevant to their lives.

Signposting and referral to services and courses is swift and effective. Most parents reported that they were able to access a range of services to improve the outcomes for their families. Many users report that access to groups and professionals improved their attitudes to and relationships with their children.

The quality of care for users and their children in the centre is good. Support for users' well-being is good across most outcomes and families report that their lives have improved because of the centre's tailored work. The midwife located at the centre has saved several young mothers' lives due to her flexible and rigorous approach and rapid referral to hospital.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities	3

meet the needs of users and the wider community	
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leaders and manager at all levels have a clear view of the provision and know where improvements should be made. This is reflected in their generally accurate self-assessment. Staff are supervised well and effectively supported to improve their practice through robust performance management procedures and professional development opportunities. Users' views are used to shape developments and inform evaluations. They are encouraged to offer their views at Parent Forum meetings.

The centre's development plan addresses local and national priorities effectively and is based on an analysis of regional data and information. However, the centre does not currently review all aspects of its provision sufficiently. Targets set are challenging and the leaders review the centre's progress towards these regularly with the local authority. Some partners provide timely and relevant information to influence the development of the provision but this is not yet consistent across all providers.

Equality and diversity are promoted successfully. This is because all services are designed to engage users from the range of backgrounds in the local area. The leaders have a reflective approach to working and continually look for new ways to reach into the local community and include all groups of users effectively. For example, fathers are effectively encouraged to attend the centre to improve their relationships with their children and families. Leaders ensure a wide variety of users and community groups make good use of the facilities. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities work closely with centre staff to recommend improvements to the building to provide a suitable meeting space. The centre offers good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key	2

agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	3
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

The Ofsted reports for schools in the locality were taken into account in the provision and outcomes judgements. The four schools were Airedale Infant School, Oyster Park Infant School, Redhill Infant School and Townville Infant School. Also the report for Airedale Neighbourhood Nursery was taken into account. The overall effectiveness of all establishments was judged good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Airedale Children's centre on 23–24 June 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

The children's centre provides a good range of services that are helping families to improve their lives. Parents and carers were eager to explain how Airedale has supported their families successfully and appreciate the positive approach of all staff. The centre can demonstrate how their work in the community has transformed some families' lives. The centre has more than doubled the number of families it works with over the last two years and the vast majority return to access more services.

The centre is working well with a range of partners and providers such as social care, some health services and education. It provides good support for children to make sure they get a good start in life and adults are guided well so they can realise their potential. Some adults now work as volunteers in the centre and attendance at courses has resulted in many receiving formal qualifications and work. Most providers ensure the centre has the relevant information from the assessments and evaluations to improve the provision but this is not yet consistent from all health providers.

The variety of courses and services provided meet a wide range of needs well. 'Bumps and Babies' and 'Stay and Play' are well attended sessions and provide good opportunities for parents and their children to play, explore and learn. The centre has worked particularly successfully with the Webster Stratton Behaviour Programme which has benefitted many families, improving safety, relationships and emotional health at home. Breastfeeding courses are led by well-trained and enthusiastic volunteers from the community. Attendance at these sessions is variable and the centre is aware that they have more to do to encourage more mothers to breast feed.

Airedale Children's Centre is led well by the manager and her team. The Parents' Forum and Partnership Board provide an effective means to hear partners', parents' and carers' views and the local authority oversee the centre's work effectively. The centre staff are supported and challenged by these groups to ensure they strive to improve outcomes for all families. Centre leaders and managers recognise they need to improve how they monitor and evaluate the courses offered to precisely plan for the future.

The inspectors have made the following recommendation to help improve the centre:

- Further improve outcomes and provision by:
 - improving the effectiveness of self-evaluation through the regular and rigorous analysis of information and data from monitoring activities
 - developing health partnerships further so that they provide the best possible range of integrated services and regular, timely and detailed information to the children's centre.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.