

# Inspection report for Richmond Hill Children's Centre

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| Local authority     | Leeds                |
| Inspection number   | 362551               |
| Inspection dates    | 27-28 September 2010 |
| Reporting inspector | Lesley Clark         |

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| Centre governance           | Local Authority  |
| Centre leader               | Mrs Nicky Richardson   |
| Date of previous inspection | n/a  |
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|   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Linked school if applicable                     |                                    |
| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | Richmond Hill Over Threes EY306243 |

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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 an additional inspector and a childcare inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, the deputy manager, the senior management team, the outreach workers, the special educational needs coordinator, the chair of the advisory board, the headteacher of the partnership primary school, the local authority interim head of service, the local authority's 'support and challenge' leader, the job and skills adviser from Jobcentre Plus, the childcare adviser for the family information service, a member of the family support team, the smoking cessation adviser and individual parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Richmond Hill children's centre serves a very disadvantaged area. Approximately 50% of the families in the area are of White British heritage. The proportion of families who are transient, including refugees and asylum seekers, and who are non-English speaking, has increased significantly within the last 18 months. The languages most commonly spoken include Tigran, and other African based languages and Mandarin Chinese. Almost 30% per cent of adults are on worklessness benefits and 80% of families are on benefits. The children's skill levels on entry to the centre are well below the level expected for their age. The centre is part of a cluster of children's centres that together offer a wide range of support services to families on the eastern side of Leeds. It offers the full provision of integrated childcare and early learning, health, family support and outreach, as well as links to Jobcentre Plus. The centre has an advisory board which was set up a year ago. The centre does not have its full quota of outreach workers.

## Inspection judgements

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

### Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

3

### Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

## Main findings

The centre meets the needs of its users satisfactorily. It makes good provision for children's learning and development and supports vulnerable children and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities well. Parent and toddler groups are well attended and have a good impact on children's behaviour, learning and development. Day care and crèche provision is of good quality and staff communicate well with both children and family members. Staff often work long hours under difficult circumstances to support families in crisis. The centre is successful at fostering parents', carers' and children's understanding of why it is important to lead healthy lives and at helping them to enjoy and achieve educationally. Adults and children gain in self-esteem and confidence as a result of the centre's work with families. The centre is highly regarded by users because of the friendly, helpful support they receive. They are keen to be involved but are under-represented on the centre's advisory board.

The level of engagement with the centre's reach area is improving but more remains to be done to gain precise information and data about different user groups and their needs so as to target specific groups and extend the range of courses on offer. The centre has started to analyse users' needs through questionnaires and the work done by the outreach workers and other agencies, but this is at an early stage. However, good local knowledge ensures that the needs of the most vulnerable are met. Outreach workers now systematically target areas of the greatest need, using home visits and home safety assessments to reach and support those who are new to the area and to break down the effects of isolation. This makes a good contribution to keeping children safe. However, forward planning does not take sufficiently into account the needs of a rapidly changing and transient clientele who do not speak English. The interpreting and translation support is not as robust as it should be and information is only in English. The centre promotes equality and diversity satisfactorily. The friendship and practical help the staff offer are its main strengths and the centre is a harmonious community as a result. Safeguarding is satisfactory.

The centre has focused on improving areas of weakness and is successful in tackling

immediate priorities. There is distinct improvement in its overall performance, despite some remaining weaknesses and the management team's roles and responsibilities are well defined. The centre has satisfactory systems and capacity to ensure that it continues to improve.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the local authority, partner agencies and outside professionals to gain precise data and information about different user groups and their needs so as to improve provision and better monitor and evaluate the impact of all services
- Improve forward planning and provision to ensure that interpreters and translation support is readily available for all new and potential users
- Increase the level of parental representation on the advisory board

## How good are outcomes for users?

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Outcomes for children and their families are improving. Parents and carers and children are increasingly aware of how to live safe and healthy lives. Children attending the day care provision eat freshly prepared food. They know when to wash their hands because staff are vigilant at promoting good hygiene practices. Children have fresh air and vigorous exercise outdoors and babies too have fresh air each day. Parents and carers attending classes to promote healthy eating commented that their children had begun to eat different types of food as a result and that they knew to offer children a wider range of fruit after learning how to make fresh fruit kebabs.

The centre does not have reliable evidence to show how it is impacting on breastfeeding promotion and support for breastfeeding mothers. The smoking cessation group meets each week and a small number of parents and carers attend. Some activities are organised in relation to immunisation. However, these are not planned or targeted to be on-going and so the impact on outcomes is intermittent. Parents and carers have access to a lot of information on health issues but these are only provided in English.

Children are safe because they are well supervised. Their parents and carers have one-to-one support and advice from outreach workers so as to ensure their children are kept from harm. Parents and carers learn to set boundaries for their children and consequently children behave well. Although domestic violence and child protection are longstanding issues within this community, the centre has no means of measuring the impact it has on reducing or ameliorating these. The centre is in the process of targeting where support is most needed, based on good local knowledge. When parents and carers come to the centre in crisis they are well supported.

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress from their starting points in their personal, social and emotional development and in developing communication, language and literacy skills. They learn to share and to play together and clearly enjoy their learning. Parents and carers say they enjoy learning with their children. For example, some said they were more likely to read and play with their children because of the Story Sacks course. The take-up of courses provided by the centre is good and a sizeable proportion of users go on to further training or gain a qualification.

Children's self-esteem and social behaviour develop well. They are active and curious learners and children from different backgrounds get on well together. Users and centre staff treat each other with respect and friendship. However, the centre does not have multilingual staff and relies on telephone support for translation. Parents and carers support each other with translations and explanations but this is an informal buddy system depending on who happens to be around at the time. The centre is narrowing the gap in achievement for those users who attend the centre. However, there is scope to do more to ensure translation services are more effective and readily accessible. Users are very enthusiastic about way in which centre supports their needs, commenting that it is 'life changing'.

>These are the grades for the outcomes for users<

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| The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles       | 2 |
| The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them                            | 3 |
| 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 governance of the centre | 3 |
| The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training     | 3 |

How good is the provision?

3

The centre works satisfactorily with other agencies to ensure services meet most users' individual needs. Outreach workers have targeted the most vulnerable families in the area and are in the process of developing a range of services to support them. For example, the weekly 'love me love me not' group provides a forum for women living with domestic violence to discuss their problems and find out how to protect themselves and their children. Courses, such as healthy cooking and computing courses, have just started because this was what users said they wanted when they

filled in the most recent questionnaire. Partner services are beginning to record and assess the impact of their work but this is at an early stage. Records so far show considerable impact on the small number of users involved and as a result individual users have gained qualifications, work experience and employment. The centre is still gathering information about the community and charting its rapidly changing clientele.

The centre promotes learning and development well for its users. The assessment of children's care and learning needs is robust and well-informed. The early identification of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, involving the support of professionals, parents and carers, means that children quickly get the provision they need. The centre's case studies show the significant impact of this on children's learning and development. Staff have adapted the learning activities to promote boys' learning after assessing their progress was slower than that of girls. The provision for parents and carers and toddlers twice a week is effective as parents learn to play with their children and staff model good practice.

The centre works well with individual users to improve their educational development. As a result, a number of young mothers have gone to college to gain GCSEs and GNVQs. The centre provides well for a wide variety of childcare arrangements. The centre delivers the early childhood services for children well and is developing a range of services for adults. It is meeting the needs of some of the targeted groups and referring others on appropriately. Although numbers attending courses are small, attendance and completion rates are high. Flexible crèche facilities also help users who need to access drop-in services at short notice or who come to the centre in crisis.

The centre is developing its range of care, support and guidance. For example, the childcare adviser for the family information service has a regular weekly slot at the centre because of the number of referrals and Jobcentre Plus accommodates ad hoc and short-term demands. Targeting support and guidance, however, is based on local knowledge rather than an accurate analysis of users' needs. Consequently, the centre is slow to meet the needs of its increasingly culturally and ethnically diverse community.

>These are the grades for the quality of provision<

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| The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users                                   | 3 |
| 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 meet the needs of users and the wider community | 3 |
| The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community                    | 3 |

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Day-to-day management is good and ensures good quality provision for children in the day care sessions. The management team has clear roles and responsibilities and staff have suitable professional development to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. The centre contributes satisfactorily to a range of different partnerships that are provided across several centres but some of the partnerships are at an early stage. Case studies show good impact on users, especially on the outcomes for health, achievement and enjoyment.

Governance and accountability arrangements are in place but are not fully effective because the advisory board is developing its role. There is no parents' and carers' forum and very few are on the advisory board. There has not been a complete audit of the skills and services available at the different centres in the area. As a result, there is a lack of clarity about the services on offer when users are referred to one of these other centres. At a local authority level, therefore, this means there is a lack of a coordinated and cohesive approach to ensure it fully meets the needs of the community.

The management team is motivated to seek further improvement and focuses successfully on priorities. However, development planning is not updated sufficiently often to take into account the needs of a rapidly changing area. The team monitors progress and outcomes but some of this is at an early stage. Self-evaluation is accurate. The management team know the centre's main strengths and areas for development. They take effective steps to ensure good quality childcare, including provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and vulnerable children. For example, they have successfully extended provision for vulnerable two-year-olds and offer extensive and flexible crèche facilities to help families in crisis. The centre gives satisfactory value for money.

The centre includes all children and families satisfactorily with strengths in the welcoming and safe environment and the warmth and friendliness of all staff. However, opportunities are missed to celebrate other cultures through displays and information. There is very evident improvement where the centre has targeted its actions. As a result, users grow in confidence, for example, the father who started an allotment at the centre. There is no discrimination and adults, staff and children using the centre work together with mutual respect.

The centre has many good arrangements to ensure safeguarding. Outreach workers are vigilant and alert to crises. Staff training is updated regularly. The centre manager works closely with staff to support them in ensuring correct and timely action is taken and that common referral forms are used to report issues or concerns. There is very little safeguarding information, advice, or helpful telephone numbers displayed around the centre to help all users take responsibility for keeping children safe. Outreach workers respond very effectively to individual families' needs and safeguarding arrangements within the centre are robust.



>These are the grades for leadership and management<

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| The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood                     | 3 |
| The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community           | 3 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community                            | 3 |
| The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties | 3 |
| The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults            | 3 |
| 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    | 3 |

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

None

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Richmond Hill Children's Centre on 27-28 September 2010. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Staff at the centre look after your children well. They support and advise all of you who want help and refer you on to other places if they need to. You and your children have a good understanding of why it is important to lead healthy lives. You also enjoy working and playing together and so that you and your children learn and develop well. The centre is also good at supporting families with particular needs and those families that include a person or a child who is disabled. We saw that the parent, carer and toddler groups are popular and are helping you to help your children. We also found that the day care and crèche are of good quality and noticed that staff get on well with both you and your children.

Everyone in the centre gets on well together and you enjoy the opportunity to make friends and learn new and useful things. The staff often work long hours to support families when they are having problems. You told us how you have gained in self-esteem and confidence because of the friendly and helpful support you have. The number of families using the centre is growing but we think more families could become involved. The outreach workers know the area well and use home visits and home safety assessments to support those of you who are new to the area and to help you to meet new people and make friends. The centre is also helping families to keep children safe.

The centre is well led and managed and the managers have clear jobs and tasks to do. This has helped the centre improve things that needed to be better but there is still more that could be done. The area that the centre serves has many people now who do not speak English as their first language. It is hard for the centre managers to offer just the right support for everyone who comes to the centre needing help and advice. We have asked the centre to work out exactly who is in their area and what sort of support they need. This will help them to plan more effectively. We have also asked that that make sure there is a lot more help and advice in languages other than English. Lastly, we think it would help the centre if more parents and carers were on the advisory board then your views could help shape the children's centre for everyone.

Thank you for helping us with the inspection and we wish you every success for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).