

# Inspection report for Seacroft Children's Centre

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Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	362561
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Reporting inspector	Rachael Flesher HMI

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Centre leader	Mrs Isabel Jones
Date of previous inspection	n/a
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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents and carers, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents and carers, 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an Early Years Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, representatives from professional partnerships, representatives from the advisory board, and the local authority, parents and carers.

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

## Information about the centre

Seacroft Children's Centre is situated in the outer-city suburb of Seacroft in the east of Leeds. It serves a community living in the 10% to 30% most deprived areas in the country. Families face issues of poor housing conditions, low levels of basic skills and high levels of unemployment, social deprivation, drug and alcohol misuse, crime and vandalism and domestic violence. The large majority of families in the centre's reach area are predominantly White British with a small percentage of families from minority ethnic groups. The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is rising, but below the national average, and there is an increasing population of Eastern European families in the area. Children enter the early years provision with skills that are much lower than those expected for their age. Seacroft Children's Centre has its own advisory board, which is made up of representatives from various professional partnerships and the local community, parents and carers and centre staff. The children's centre is governed by Leeds City council. Seacroft Children's Centre evolved from a Sure Start Local Programme and was designated as a children's centre in 2003. The centre is currently in the process of having a large extension built to accommodate further services and activities and, as a result, some services are currently being delivered from alternative venues in the local community. The centre provides the full core offer.

## 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

1
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### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1
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## Main findings

This welcoming and highly effective children's centre understands and serves the needs of its community extremely well. Through the exceptional support, commitment and dedication of the high quality centre staff and services, the life chances of parents, carers and children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds have dramatically improved. Children and families make excellent progress in all outcomes, often whilst facing the most challenging of circumstances.

Provision is exemplary, particularly in the early years as is the critical work carried out by the family outreach workers. The emphasis the centre places on reaching out to the community and forming positive relationships with all users and services is crucial to their success. Staff have developed expert skills and invest considerable time in gradually building the trust of children, parents and carers and the community. This provides a safe base for them to feel confident to share their problems and ask for help, often in times of crisis. Supporting children and their families during times of change and transition, to ensure continuity, engagement and progress, is also a significant strength of the centre.

The centre demonstrates an excellent capacity for sustained improvement. The sheer determination by all involved to secure outstanding outcomes for children and their families, by constantly monitoring and improving the quality and impact of services and activities provided, is commendable. The centre actively seeks and welcomes the views of users, services and the wider community. It meaningfully involves them in the work and governance of the centre and in shaping the services of the future. This, coupled with the centres extremely flexible approach to the delivery of services, ensures that the exceptional support provided is correctly targeted to the changing needs of the community, families and children.

Equality is promoted sensitively and a very effective and robust approach is taken to

any form of discrimination at a community and multi-agency level. Safeguarding is given the utmost priority with extremely effective and rigorous policies and procedures in place to ensure the safety and health of all users, staff and services. Staff are confident to follow procedures and skilled in identifying any issues and swiftly referring to other agencies where necessary.

Highly effective partnerships and information sharing systems between providers and most other agencies ensure a robust and appropriately coordinated approach to service delivery. They also assist in the centre, accurately knowing the needs of its reach area and wider community and supporting the invaluable outreach work undertaken to locate all those who may need the support of the centre services. However, information held by health and education on the location of those in the pre-natal stages of pregnancy and new parents, including teenage parents, is not currently being shared with the centre. This has created a lot of unnecessary work for front line staff in their efforts to ensure these families are located and supported. Members of the Children's Trust Board are in the process of resolving this issue.

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

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve information sharing systems between the Primary Care Trust, Education Leeds and the children's centre, to ensure a fully co-ordinated approach to locating and supporting all parents, including teenage parents, through pre-natal and ante-natal care. (The Children's Trust)

## How good are outcomes for users?

1
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The children's centre is an extremely safe and secure environment where children's well-being is given the utmost priority. Staff work hard to successfully build secure and attached relationships with children and parents and carers. Children subject to a child protection plan or Common Assessment Framework processes are extremely well supported due to the highly effective multi-agency team around the child approach. Information is shared and referrals made to professionals and services where necessary, to ensure all are fully informed, and needs are addressed with consistency and rigour. Children, parents and carers are learning how to keep themselves safe through activities and services provided by the centre. Home safety assessments, carried out by the family outreach workers, are an extremely well utilised and effective service. These visits are helping families understand how to keep their children safe at home and minimise any risks through the equipment provided and fitted by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

Parents and carers comment on how the children's centre has made a significant difference to their children's outcomes. They report that their children are healthier, better behaved, happy and making very good progress in all areas of the development, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Through stay and play sessions and the child's key person, parents and carers are learning how to actively support their children's learning and development at home, through play, which is proving extremely effective. Parents and carers also told inspectors how they too had been supported to set and achieve their own goals and reported how they now have more self-esteem and confidence in their capabilities, with many securing employment and accessing training.

The support and information for parents and carers regarding their child's transition into the early years provision and onto school is exemplary and is greatly improving outcomes. Children make outstanding progress from their starting points in developing the skills that will help them in the future. Schools have reported very positively on how the centre has impacted on narrowing the gap in children's skills, development and readiness for school. Seacroft Grange Primary School stated how the centre has helped produce excellent attendance levels and they report year-on-year progress with children attaining above average by the end of Key Stage 2.

Families have very good access to the range of services they need to promote the good health and well-being of children and families and a high level of families are engaged with universal and specialist services as appropriate. Health services report that the take up of immunisation is very high. Activities and home visits effectively help parents and carers to learn how to provide their families with a healthy well balanced diet. Children in the early years provision have direct access to the extremely well resourced outdoor area, where many of the children spend the majority of their time, in all weathers.

Parents and carers are actively encouraged to participate in the decision making of the centre. Their feedback on a range of issues, and their satisfaction in the services provided, is meaningfully and regularly sought and used to shape services. Through activities such as the excellent '2gether we grow' programme the centre has successfully empowered parents and carers to take a more active part in the governance of the centre. Parents and carers are encouraged to join the advisory board, along with representatives from a wide range of agencies and the local community.

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	1
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and	1

parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	
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### How good is the provision?

1
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All centre staff, partner agencies and the local authority have an in depth understanding of the issues facing the families living in their community. The needs of families are thoroughly assessed sensitively and appropriately to ensure tailored services are provided to suit their individual needs. The centre then works extremely effectively in partnerships with other agencies to ensure further assessments, such as those carried out under the Common Assessment Framework, and assessments of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, are robust and well-informed. This flexible and personalised approach to identifying and supporting families' needs, through a team around the family approach, is a significant strength of the centre.

Each child who accesses the centre has a profile that tracks their progress and achievements in great detail during their time at the centre. Parents and carers are increasingly contributing their own observations and information to this alongside the child's key person. Any issues are discussed and addressed together with parents and carers, involving additional services where appropriate, based on assessment of needs. This information feeds into a summative assessment carried out at the end of the child's time in the nursery. All information is shared in detail with the school the child moves onto to inform the school's planning and assessments, to ensure every child receives the support they need as soon as they start. This ensures all children have the best start at school.

An excellent range of services and activities are delivered by the centre, or on their behalf, to ensure there is a very good balance of universal and targeted services provided to meet the needs of the community. Home visits from the family outreach workers are having great success in engaging families, identifying their needs, referring them to other services and providing ongoing support and advice, thus improving their outcomes. A wide range of case study evidence demonstrates how the centre has supported many families facing a range of issues, sometimes during times of particular crisis. Parents and children value highly the key person system and the visits they and the family outreach workers make to their home. Due to the strong relationships established, families feel confident in turning to the centre and are extremely well supported.

Through excellent services commissioned by the centre, for example Job Centre Plus, and through links with local colleges, parents and carers are developing economic stability, independence and access to training and employment, resulting in notable improvements in their family's outcomes. The centre has had many successes in enabling parents and carers to achieve qualifications and enter employment as a direct result of the support and encouragement they have been given, particularly through the work of the Job Centre Plus adviser linked to the centre. The 'Better Off Calculations' tool used to assess families' finances and explore ways to save them

money is greatly valued by parents and carers and is making a significant impact on their well-being.

These are the grades for the quality of provision<

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	1
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Governance and accountability arrangements are very well established and understood by all. Excellent monitoring and evaluating processes are in place at a strategic and centre level. The local authority has worked hard to develop a very successful system for providing children centres with local reach area data to ensure the most vulnerable groups are identified. The centre uses this information to support their findings and to plan and address areas of focus for further developments, in order of priority. The advisory board includes an extremely wide range of representatives of its users from partner services, parents and carers and members of the community. They play a key part in the centre's success in achieving its aims and objectives, shaping services and developing effective partnerships. All hold the centre to account and ask challenging questions in order to secure the best outcomes for the community. An ethos of self-evaluation and reflective practice is embedded amongst all centre staff and service partners and is used exceptionally well to set meaningful targets to improve the impact of their services and activities in order to narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged.

The centre manager has extremely high expectations of the centre users, the staff team and service partners. There is an air of infectious enthusiasm amongst the staff and service partners of the children's centre. They demonstrate genuine commitment, dedication and determination to improving outcomes for all children and their families. The inclusion of all families and children is exemplary and fully promoted in all aspects of the centre's provision to ensure the diverse needs of children and their families are supported with equal concern. Staff are extremely motivated, fully engaged and committed in all aspects of their professional development. This highly motivating ethos stems from the high level of commitment of the manager to empower staff to develop their skills, experience and qualifications. This ensures staff remain highly skilled to meet the range of changing needs which they encounter in the community and the centre.

Early intervention and preventative work is key to the success of the children's centre



in securing future outcomes. Extremely well trained and knowledgeable staff have great confidence in identifying the needs and issues families are facing early on. They diligently follow the robust policies and procedures in place, including working closely with other agencies, to ensure support is exceptionally well targeted in order to intervene early to prevent situations escalating. Parents are very well informed of the centre's policy on protecting children and sharing information with other agencies as required. Staff are well trained and experienced in sensitively supporting families facing domestic violence to promote the well-being of all concerned. Robust arrangements are in place to ensure all staff and other professionals delivering services from the centre are suitable to have access to children.

Resources are used and managed extremely efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community. The centre manager is determined to ensure the children's centre is sustainable and provides excellent value for money, and manages the financial budget extremely well. Staff are very well deployed and utilised and resources and accommodation are shared with other services where appropriate. Partnership working with other children's centres in the area prevents duplication of services and ensures each are targeting families in their clearly defined reach areas.

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	1
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	1
The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	1
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
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	1

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

None

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Seacroft Children's Centre on 22-23 September 2010. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. We found your children's centre to be very welcoming and friendly. Everyone understands the needs of your community extremely well and successfully support you through the many challenges you and your families face, greatly improving your circumstances. Excellent systems are in place to assess your family's needs and provide targeted support from a range of services, for example, through the Common Assessment Framework process.

Overall, the local authority provides very good information to help the centre identify the families it needs to target, and the centre works hard to reach out to all those in the community who may benefit from their support. However, information held by Health and Education Leeds regarding expectant parents, including teenage parents, is not currently being shared with the centre and this means the family outreach workers spend considerable time trying to locate these families, often by knocking on doors. The local authority has been asked to improve this.

Those of you who spoke to us told us that you highly value the visits made to your home by the family outreach workers and your child's key person at nursery and this has significantly helped to establish excellent relationships and access support. We agree that these home visits are invaluable and ensure the centre has an in depth understanding of the changing needs of families living in your community and in building trusting relationships where you feel confident to share issues you are facing. Your children's centre values and actively seeks your opinions and views to inform future plans in order to achieve even better outcomes for your families.

You also told us that your children's centre has made a significant difference to your children's outcomes; that your children are healthier, safer, better behaved, happy and making very good progress. You told us the support the centre gives you, for example, through home visits, stay and play sessions, '2gether we grow' project and

your child's key person, has really helped you learn how your child develops and what they need at home to promote the best outcomes. We too can see the extremely good progress your children are making. You also told us how your children's centre has supported you to set and achieve your own goals, and how you now have more self-esteem and confidence. This was evident when we met with some of you during our visit. You told us how Job Centre Plus has helped you to manage your finances, fill out forms, advised on benefits and supported many of you to access further training, develop your skills and find employment. This had made a significant impact on the well-being of your families.

A key strength of your children's centre is how it supports families during times of change. For example, when your children start nursery and when they move onto school. Staff actively involve you at every opportunity and keep you fully informed. Schools can see the significant impact your children's centre is having on narrowing the gap between the most disadvantaged children and the rest. This means your children are extremely well prepared for school and get off to a flying start. Seacroft Grange Primary School told us that your children have excellent attendance levels and go on to achieve above average levels at the end of Key Stage 2. This is excellent and must continue to ensure your children get the best start in life.

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