

# Inspection report for The Arnold Centre

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Local authority	Rotherham
Inspection number	364437
Inspection dates	22-23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Elizabeth Srogi HMI

Centre governance	The Arnold Centre Governing Body
Centre leader	Mrs Margaret Hague
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	The Arnold Centre Day Care EY378398

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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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Early Years Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, staff, senior leaders, partners and representatives of the governing body and local authority.

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

## Information about the centre

The Arnold Centre was completed in 1999 and replaced an existing nursery school building; it was designated as an Early Excellence Centre in 2001. In 2006 children's centre status was gained and the centre provides the full core offer of services as a Phase 1 children's centre. Governance of the centre is provided by The Arnold Centre governing body on behalf of the local authority.

The main centre has a Foundation 1 nursery including a 12 place pre-school and a community room. A second building across the road from the main centre has a day care provision for 24 children from birth to the age of three, and a training room and meeting room. The nursery and day care provision have been subject to their own inspection. The inspection report can be found at [www.Ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.Ofsted.gov.uk). Most children enter early education and care with a much narrower range of experiences and skills than that expected for their age.

The centre is based in an area of high socio-economic deprivation with many children living in workless households, and serves the community of three housing estates close to the centre of Rotherham. The majority of children and families served by the centre are from a White British background. However, services are also provided to families from different cultures including Asian families and those who speak English as an additional language.

## 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

2

### Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

## Main findings

The Arnold Children's Centre provides a very warm, welcoming, vibrant and safe environment for all its users. The work that is done by the centre is highly valued by all involved, including parents and carers, children and partnership professionals. The enthusiasm with which users and professionals entered into discussion with inspectors is testimony to this, and their comments are unanimously positive and complimentary about the centre.

Children's enjoyment is particularly evident as they are seen to be happy and content, and enjoying stimulating activities throughout the centre. The progress made by children who use the centre is very evident and this contributes significantly to the percentage of children who achieve higher scores in their Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results and in closing the achievement gap. This was confirmed by the nearby infant school headteacher whose reception year is predominately made up of children who have attended the children's centre. Centre staff have a substantial knowledge of the centre's users and there is mutual respect between all users and staff. Users of the centre highlight how staff are always helpful and very supportive, are never judgemental and never tell them what they are doing is wrong but just help them find other better ways to deal with things.

Safeguarding and safety are distinctive strengths of the centre. All staff involved in working in the centre have a clear and unflinching understanding of their roles in protecting children and are very clear of the processes to follow if they have concerns about a child. They work effectively together to reduce the risk of harm.

The extent to which users contribute to the overall decision making in the centre is satisfactory. The centre encourages parents and carers to express their views on the centre, values their evaluation of services and acts on their suggestions. However,

too few are actively involved in the work of the advisory board for the centre. The advisory board is currently shared with another centre and meetings are held at alternate venues. It is felt that parents and carers are reluctant to go to meetings in other centres and that this is impacting on parental involvement. The head of centre is fully aware of this, action is being taken and it is identified in the centre's action plan.

Centre staff have a good knowledge of the local community and strive to involve users from across the reach area. However, it is acknowledged by the management team that families in one particular part of the area are proving more difficult to engage with and are not sufficiently served by the centre, although work with families in the area who are specifically referred to the centre is good. This is a concern to the centre and every effort is being taken to improve engagement with them and to actively involve them in the centre's work. The centre outreach worker is actively pursuing activities to achieve this. Links have been established to work with another project in the area to further promote the work of the children's centre.

Outcomes and provision for users are mostly good and users speak highly of how the support they have received from the centre has improved their lives. Many activities are provided to enhance outcomes for children and families. Amongst the range of activities provided by the centre is a smoking cessation group. However, local data to show the impact of this work in the centre is not available and therefore the centre is limited in how it can demonstrate how it has supported health targets.

The head of centre manages the day-to-day running of the centre effectively and is highly respected by professionals and users of the centre. Staff and governors are very enthusiastic to embrace new initiatives and work together to further improve the lives of the families in the reach area. This high level of commitment along with well trained staff means that there is good capacity to improve further.

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

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the advisory board to ensure that a sufficient number of parents and carers are involved so users of the centre are fully represented and can more effectively contribute to the decision making, strategic planning and evaluation of services.
- Improve the availability of data information which is specific to the immediate reach of the centre and the impact of its work, including that which relates to the national indicator sets.
- Further improve access, particularly in hard to reach areas to ensure all potential users are enabled to engage in the centre's activities.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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Most outcomes for children and their families who attend the centre or who receive support through outreach and home visits are good. The use of the bilingual worker is effective in helping the centre meet the needs of its Asian families. Parents tell us how the centre has significantly helped them through dark times, to be more confident to leave their homes and to take part in activities in their community. They tell us how courses completed through the centre have increased their confidence in bringing up their children, improved their aspirations, given them qualifications and how they now hope to be able to take up employment. However, there is limited other information available to further show how parents and carers are being helped into work. The good range of opportunities available to children and their families enables them to work and learn together and have fun. Feedback from the 'Dads Club' highlights how it has improved their confidence and how they are able to try out new activities with their children and meet other dads.

The outcomes related to the health of centre users are satisfactory overall but the success of some initiatives, for example, the smoking cessation group, is not known. However, despite this, health outcomes are improving due to the centre's work. The quality of guidance provided on health, safety and education, both in displays around the centre and in the literature available, is very high. Parents' workshops both in group and one-to-one sessions on such topics as healthy eating, toileting and hygiene in the home are well attended. They are having a significant impact as parents highlight how they have made changes in meals served at home as a result of the workshops. Parents and carers speak highly of the breastfeeding support group, and a young parent specifically highlighted that this support had definitely helped her to continue breastfeeding: without it she would have given up. Her confidence has been increased so much she is now a volunteer peer breastfeeding supporter at the centre. Available data indicates that support from the children's centre is improving the number of mums continuing to breastfeed. Ensuring the emotional well-being of users is a high priority for the centre. The quick response by centre staff when families hit times of crisis in their lives is key. In one parent's words, the way the centre provided a full day care place for her son when she became ill was crucial to her family, she did not know what she would have done without the centre's help or how she would have got through that year without them.

Children are well prepared for mainstream school due to the high quality of the services provided in the centre's child care provision, nursery and pre-school. Activities are often shared with parents and other users of the centre and the wider community, to impact positively on their learning and development. For example, the recent autumn celebration used vegetables grown in the outdoor area to make soup for all. The support and information provided to parents and carers on transition between the provision in the centre and on going to school is excellent and relationships with the children's centre often continue after the children have gone onto other provision. The nearby school has developed some extended services to

meet family need as a result of liaison with the centre.

The centre ensures children are safe because this is a high priority around the centre, in the support given to families in workshops and by the direct input of the outreach worker who, during home visits, can provide, as required, equipment to improve safety. Safeguarding requirements in the centre are fully met. The common assessment framework processes used are robust and well informed. The centre works closely with partners to meet the needs of children on child protection plans and those who are looked after. Effective cooperative working means many children are helped to come off plans. Services provided, such as when review meetings are held within the centre, improve family access and involvement.

Children's behaviour throughout the centre is extremely good and it is evident that there is mutual respect between users and staff. Users' views are regularly obtained and are used to shape the services on offer. For example, when it became evident that the carer and toddler group was at capacity other groups such as the '0 to walkers' were initiated. The independent advice and support commissioned by the centre has had a very positive impact on improving families' lives through monetary gain.

#### 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 governance of the centre	2
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?

2

The centre mostly provides good quality services, which are helping to improve the outcomes for families attending the centre and for those who receive more targeted support in their own homes. It is acknowledged by the centre that more work needs to be done to further include families in harder to reach areas in the activities of the centre. The centre staff work well together and in partnership with other agencies to ensure the assessment of children's and families' individual needs is robust and well informed. The common assessment framework is used well, staff report that the detailed way in which the forms are completed enables all involved with the child and

their family to work together to improve outcomes. Places are available in all the services the centre provides for vulnerable families. A particular strength of the nursery is their extended services and their provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The centre's special educational needs coordinator liaises with leaders and parents in all parts of the centre to help identify or support individual needs to ensure children are provided with extremely good learning experiences and to access further services. The centre also provides a venue for weekly childminder meetings and opportunities to link with nursery staff, ensuring consistency in the shared care of a child.

The provision of services by health in the centre such as the 'baby weigh and stay' sessions have improved the number of families accessing services. Parents and carers highlight how valuable they have found this and cannot wait to attend. The health services' formal links with family support at the monthly meeting enables information to be shared to support vulnerable families in particular.

Care, guidance and support for users are given priority. Effective systems are in place to identify users' training and support needs and programmes are organised, often in partnership with others, to provide support. All achievements within the centre are celebrated to raise users' self-esteem and confidence. Although Job Centre Plus is not based in the centre, the effective links in place between the named adviser and the centre outreach worker enable users of the centre to be provided with the top 100 jobs available in relation to the reach area and with information and guidance leaflets. This information is updated regularly. The centre also signposts users to the nearby neighbourhood weekly Job Centre drop-in service for further help and guidance and Job Centre Plus attend events held in the centre. The children's centre provides crèche facilities which enable users to attend training.

#### 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 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	2

#### How effective are the leadership and management?

2

There are clear processes and accountability arrangements between centre management, the governing body and the local authority. All those involved in the running of the centre have a firm and strong commitment to its work in improving the lives of the children and families it serves. The head of centre and her management team work together to drive the quality of the centre forward. They, and all staff within the centre, are committed to improvement and all are enthusiastic



about the work they do to improve children's and families' lives. The recent development day involving centre staff and governors gave the opportunity to evaluate the work carried out over the last year and to plan the way forward. It is accepted that evaluation of services needs to be more balanced to take account of all that the centre offers. A significant strength of this centre is how staff across all sections of the centre, including nursery, day care, family support and outreach, work together to best use expertise and skills to improve outcomes for families. There are clear management arrangements in place and the centre has a strong commitment to staff development. The governing body and the local authority actively monitor and challenge the work of the centre in line with action plans which detail priorities and targets for the centre. Effective monitoring ensures financial oversight of the centre to ensure it gives value for money.

Safeguarding procedures are good. All staff and volunteers have had the required checks carried out and anyone who comes into the centre without clearance is never left unsupervised with children. All relevant staff have had training and all staff spoken to are very clear on the actions they would take if they had any safeguarding concerns. Two centre staff have completed the training for trainers course and are now qualified to train other practitioners and some staff have had domestic violence awareness training. Health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out to ensure the safety of all when taking part in activities provided by the centre.

Inclusion is at the centre of the provision and the buildings used are accessible to all. The centre has a strong commitment to working with both adults and children from all ethnic and social backgrounds and with those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, the engagement of users from within the harder to reach parts of the area remains a challenge. Displays around the centre reflect positive images and promote equal opportunities. There are systems in place to support families who speak English is an additional language by accessing interpreter services from partners or by the services of the centre's bilingual worker. The many partnerships in place are strong and have a good impact on improving outcomes for children and families.

#### 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	3
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 agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable	2

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	2
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

Inspection report for The Arnold Centre Nursery and Child Care settings.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected The Arnold Children's Centre on 22 -23 September. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we looked at the centre's activities and documents, and spoke to managers, staff, and other professionals who work in the centre and with many of you. Please accept my thanks for taking the time to talk to us.

Parents and carers who spoke to us all said how The Arnold Centre is a friendly and welcoming place. They find staff to be very helpful and supportive and highlighted the fact that they do not judge or tell you that what you are doing is wrong but give you ideas of how to do things better. Many of you gave examples of how the support of and the activities at the centre had made a difference to your families' lives.

Children who attend the childcare provision or the nursery are making good progress in their learning and development. Children and their families who attend the many activities available in the centre enjoy the sessions. Parents and carers tell us that they have made them more confident in bringing up their children.

The centre staff and their partner agencies have provided families with a good range of services to improve their children's and families' lives. For example, mums particularly highlight that the breastfeeding support group has helped them to continue to breastfeed their babies and that workshops on healthy eating have helped with the meals they serve at home. However, the centre staff cannot tell inspectors whether the smoking support group is helping families to stop smoking, so they have been asked to make sure they have data to measure their success.

Ensuring the safety of children is a strength of the centre and all staff work well together to reduce the risk of harm to children. Parents and carers tell us that they and their children are safe in the centre. Centre staff have given advice on safety in the home and safety equipment has been made available for use.

The centre listens to the views of the centre users and the information is used to make changes to what the centre offers. However, the amount that parents and carers are involved in the management of the centre is more limited so inspectors have asked the centre to encourage them to be members of the centre's advisory board.

The management of the centre is good and there are plans in place to improve things further. However, we have advised them that more needs to be done to ensure all families in the area can access the activities of the children's centre in the way that you can.

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