

Inspection report for Windmill Hill Children's Centre

Local authority	Halton
Inspection number	384222
Inspection dates	2 - 3 February 2012
Reporting inspector	Qaisra Shahraz

Centre leader	Mrs Claire Hunter
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Windmill Hill Children's Centre Norton Hill Windmill Hill Runcorn WA7 6QE
Telephone number	01928 717132
Fax number	
Email address	claire.hunter@halton.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	111177 Windmill Hill School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY346757 Windmill Hill Nursery
	303454 Windmill Hill Play Centre

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012

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 additional inspector and one early years, inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the centre's advisory board, partnership agencies, local authority, members of staff and users of the centre.

The inspectors held meetings with the staff, manager and parents from the centre and representatives from the local authority. Inspectors also met with a number of partners including those from education, health, voluntary and private organisations. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Windmill Hill Children's Centre covers the wards of Windmill Hill and Norton North, Daresbury in the Halton borough of Runcorn. It is a phase one children's centre and provides the full core offer of family learning, health services, family support, outreach work, financial and employment advice and Jobcentre Plus. Early Years Foundation Stage education is provided by voluntary sector organisations in the reach area. The centre operates a wide range of services from a number of associated venues, including local medical centres, Windmill Hill School and Murdishaw Community Centre. A crèche facility is available for the users taking adult learning courses on the centre premises. The Principal Manager also manages Brookvale Children's Centre and staff work at both centres. The joint advisory board covers four local children's centres in Halton and the local authority commissions the centre.

The centre serves an area, which experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage. The unemployment rate is significantly above the national average with 58% of families in this area receiving financial support, which is above the national average and above the average for Halton. Data from the centre indicates that 15% of children are obese at reception age in the Windmill Hill ward. The majority of the housing within the area is

social housing with some private housing in the Daresbury ward. The vast majority of the population are of White British heritage. A low proportion of families are from ethnic minority backgrounds, of which most are Polish.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage provision with skills and abilities that are below those typically expected for their age.

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 families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Windmill Hill centre offers good levels of care, guidance and support to those hard-to-reach families that access its services. Those who use the centre value the warm, safe and welcoming environment. Many users say 'the centre is a godsend and don't know what I will be doing otherwise'.

Outcomes are good overall. Healthy lifestyles are well promoted with children and families who regularly use the centre. Although health outcomes are improving, especially for breastfeeding and smoking, there is insufficient evidence of the centre's impact on reducing obesity rates for children starting school and improving oral hygiene.

The centre has improved the quality of provision by using relevant data from health, education and other service providers to evaluate need and target provision. It offers a wide range of purposeful activities, which develop users' social, personal and educational skills as well as enhancing self-esteem and positive relationships. Users enjoy and value these activities very much including family fun days and trips.

The centre is well led and managed, effectively using relevant information and data available to set realistic, measurable targets to improve outcomes for families in the reach area. Local authority supervision and management systems are good and key drivers for improvement and staff performance management rigorous and robust. The advisory body is well represented by many key partners and plays an active and confident role in providing a valuable source of information to assist the centre in planning services and a level of

challenge. The centre benefits from the good relationships and strong partnerships between staff and other agencies especially the local school and medical centre.

The centre and staff are committed to inclusion and strive to improve the life chances of all users. For example, disabled users and those with special educational needs benefit greatly from activities offered on Saturdays tailored to meet their individual needs. The centre is effective in identifying local requirements but does not yet engage fully with groups who do not currently widely access the centre's activities, for instance, teenage mothers and fathers. All families attending are fully included and valued. However, the centre does not fully demonstrate an active approach to the promotion and celebration of all forms of diversity.

Safeguarding is very well promoted at the centre. A wide range of safeguarding policies and procedures inform practice. Adult users are encouraged to become involved in all aspects of the centre, including in the decision-making and governance of the centre.

The centre uses and manages all its resources efficiently including the deployment of staff between two centres, thus providing good value for money. The positive impact of the centre's work on outcomes for children and families, together with good overall leadership and management of the centre, indicate that the centre has good capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve further the health outcomes, in particular the obesity rates for children starting school, and oral hygiene in the reach area
- Develop further the strategies to identify local needs and engage with specific groups in the community, such as fathers and teenage mothers
- Increase opportunities for children and parents to learn about all forms of diversity in the wider world and gain an awareness of the cultures and beliefs of others.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Outcomes for users are good. The centre makes a good contribution to improving the health of families and the educational achievements of children and adults. Adult users not only enjoy their learning and gain new skills but often make a positive contribution to the community, for instance in contributing to the decision making and governance of the centre and helping shape the service offered. Groups such as 'mini movers' and 'baby groovers' are popular and help parents gain a good understanding of the importance of developing children's skills from an early age.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted throughout the centre and in all its work. The 'New shoots' campaign to enabled users to provide healthy meals by accessing bags of locally produced

fresh fruit and vegetables at discounted prices in the centre is successful. There have been good improvements in the take-up and sustaining of breast feeding and successful smoking cessation in particular. The latest figures show that 40% of smokers successfully stopped smoking in the reach area. However, oral hygiene for young children and obesity in the area, which is still below the national average, remains an issue.

The views of parents and carers are taken into account when planning services. The centre's inclusive approach makes a true difference to the vulnerable children and adult users' lives, often resulting in positive relationships and social behaviour change for the better. One user stated that the 'centre calmed me down'. Parents confidently explained how they are able to manage their children's behaviour better stating 'the centre helped me with my children before I panicked; now I handle it better.'

Positive outcomes for children are successfully promoted through a multi-agency delivery of learning and development. Strategies to improve children's learning and development in the Early Years Foundation Stage are well targeted and are helping to prepare children successfully for transition to school. The speech therapy team work well with the centre and staff to enable young children to successfully improve their language and communication skills.

In the past year the centre has been very successful in enabling users to benefit from adult learning to enhance not only their social, educational and employability skills but also develop their literacy and numeracy skills. There is a high level of achievement in gaining qualifications, including success rates at 80% for literacy and numeracy. Many adult users are currently following routes to gaining qualification and/or employment.

The centre has been effective in ensuring all users are aware of how to keep themselves safe both in the centre and in their homes. The 'Helps' initiative, which provides safety equipment for the home, is much appreciated by users and has had a positive impact on reducing accidents in the home. The centre provides good support for referred families. Multi-agency working is effective in safeguarding children and supporting those on child protection plans and the Common Assessment Framework is used effectively when specialist intervention is required.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families:

The extent to which children, including those from target 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	2
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2

The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment.	2
---	---

How good is the provision?

2

The centre's provision is good. The centre provides a wide range of services and activities which meet the needs of families, including those in target groups and which 'Offer all the right classes at the right time', as one user stated. The centre is good in promoting purposeful learning. For example, Halton Adult Education Service provides regular literacy, numeracy and childcare courses in addition to courses to increase self-esteem. These enhance users' skills as well as increase employment opportunities. Ongoing dialogue with the users means courses are tailored to meet the needs of families, which has helped some families more effectively deal with debt.

Users appreciate the high level of enjoyment generated by many of the activities offered by the centre. For instance visits to the New Brighton beach, walking through the streets with their own handmade lanterns, the Christmas party with gifts of hats and gloves are some of the 'family fun' events enjoyed by all. Users spoke highly of such activities, for example, one mother said 'what a difference going to the beach for the first time made for my child'.

Similarly parents appreciate the opportunities provided to help them learn about the Early Years Foundation Stage and how they can help support their child's learning and development. Celebration of success is a regular feature in the centre's diary, with adults taking part in certificate receiving ceremonies which helps promote achievement.

The quality of care, guidance and support is good with users describing the centre as a 'very supportive, very friendly environment.' Outreach services are effective in meeting the needs of the community. The new Integrated Working Support Team (IWST) supports the centre well to identify the children and families most in need. Consequently, disabled children and those with special educational needs receive early intervention and focused support.

Strong partnership work between agencies, good local knowledge of the area and use of the Common Assessment Framework ensures that centre workers are delegating resources well to those most in need. Links with Jobcentre Plus are good. Users are provided with careers advice or helped with matters relating to benefits and funding issues as well as routes into employment. One user said she now had a 'chance to go back to work.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision:

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2

The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups.	2
---	---

How effective are the leadership and management? 2

Leadership and management are good. The staff team is well led and the lines of accountability are clearly understood. The centre works closely with another children's centre in Halton and shares its advisory board with three other centres. This arrangement is working well with clear roles and responsibilities understood by all parties. The quality of the data is good and managers use it well to improve the provision. Performance monitoring is effective with systematic monitoring in place to continually check against local and national targets. All staff are motivated and effectively work towards achieving their individual objectives as identified during supervision sessions. Staff are supported well to raise their skills and qualification level and this contributes to their personal development and enables them to support their users well.

The centre benefits from the good relationships and strong partnerships between staff and other agencies especially the local school and medical centre. There is a strong ethos of working together across all the partner agencies who welcome the opportunity to making a direct contribution to improving the lives of families. Inclusion and meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families is a key priority for the centre. The Saturday programme of activities for disabled users and those with special educational needs is most welcomed, not only as a form of respite for families but also enables users to gain new skills. The building and available space is used well and attractively decorated to provide a warm and welcoming environment. However, the extent to which children and parents learn about the wider world and gain an awareness of the cultures and beliefs of others is limited.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults using the centre is good and given a high priority. Key staff are trained at the appropriate level and consequently, vulnerable families have the necessary support. Stringent recruitment and induction procedures and policies are in place and are clearly understood and followed by all the staff. Risk assessments are carried out daily to ensure the safety of the building and users. The centre's self-evaluation systems and development plan is well focused on local and national targets and set against a realistic, challenging and measurable criteria. Planning of sessions is linked to the targets identified in the development plans and the evaluation of activities and their impact is thorough and reflects the views of users.

The advisory board is well focused on the issues facing Windmill Hill reach area and the members are clear about their roles and offer good support and advice. Similarly the direction from the local authority in its supervision arrangements of the centre has led to an improved provision and outcomes for users. However, the centre needs to more fully explore strategies to engage young mothers and fathers who do not access the centre.

Resources are managed effectively and feedback from the active parents forum and evaluations clearly show that users are extremely happy with services and activities provided by the centre and with the quality of the environment within the centre. Consequently, the centre provides 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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area 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

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Windmill Hill Children's Centre on 2 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We were delighted to learn how the centre which one of you described as 'beautiful' has both improved and transformed your lives. Those of you who met us, spoke highly of the difference the centre had made to your lives. One of you said that you 'had a hard year, met new friends, and are now a lot happier, confident and outgoing'. We could see for ourselves how the centre and all its partner agencies have worked hard to meet your varied needs and to get some of the more reluctant users 'through the doors'.

You value the help given to you by the centre, saying how everyone 'treats you like a human being'. Most of you have not only developed your confidence, self-esteem, parenting skills but also achieved certificates in literacy, numeracy, first aid and childcare. You told us how you have also improved your parenting skills and enjoy more positive relationships at home and are better able to support your children's learning and play at home.

In particular we are pleased to note how you have all begun to adopt a healthier lifestyle, with some of you benefiting from buying bags of fresh fruit and vegetables from the centre. It was equally pleasing to learn that a lot of you have also either successfully given up smoking or are attempting to do so. Well done! Similarly we are glad to learn about how safe your homes are, as a result of guidance from the centre staff and by using some of the equipment either bought from or provided by the centre.

You all told us how much you enjoyed many of the activities that the centre offered especially those 'family fun days', of going to beach and making lanterns with your children. You have been active in informing the centre of your views through the 'parents voice' group and during your favourite coffee morning session on a Friday.

During our observation we could see how the centre provided you with an excellent opportunity to network with other parents and staff, particularly helping mothers with young babies to feel less isolated at home. For example, one of you described it as 'having somewhere to go and seeing other mums, making friends and going for a walk'.

We are happy to inform you that the centre is well managed. The leaders and managers are good at planning and supervising the activities of the centre and linking them with what is needed in your area. The local authority and the advisory board members who supervise and support the work of the staff help to ensure that the centre is running efficiently.

Support and guidance for you is really good at the centre. The centre manager, staff and all partners work very hard to make their services available to you. Although the staff work on two sites they are dedicated to supporting you and your family as best as they can. For example, whether it is helping you to make your home safe or helping you with benefit issues at the Jobcentre Plus. Although it is a small centre you all like its premises and feel it had improved tremendously from the old centre. Taking all this into account we think the centre and its provision is good value for money.

We have asked the centre to involve more fathers and young mothers into its programme of activities, so that they too can benefit. Similarly to keep up its good work on healthy lifestyles, we have asked the centre to focus more on oral hygiene for young children and

work with all of you as a team to reduce obesity in your area. The centre also needs to become more active in celebrating diversity, for example, so that you and your children can learn about other cultures and customs.

We wish you the best with your learning at the centre and thank you for talking to us.

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