

Inspection report for Farnley Children's Centre

Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	383439
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Reporting inspector	Jean Webb

Centre leader	Gillian Trow
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	107973 Lawns Park Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

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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.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with senior managers and staff from the centre and the local authority, parents, members of the advisory board, local partners including health, Jobcentre Plus and the local nursery and schools.

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

Information about the centre

Farnley Children's Centre is in West Leeds and was re-designated as a phase one centre in December 2009 with the full core offer. It is a hub children's centre working out of an office and small community room within Lawn's Park Primary School. The centre works closely with four local primary schools, two community centres, a church, two private nurseries, a network of childminders and a health centre to deliver services.

There are 1019 children under five in the Farnley reach area and a quarter of these children live in the 20% most deprived areas and a quarter within the 10% most deprived areas. Farnley covers a very diverse socio-economic demography. Some parts are extremely rural with large, recently built detached homes but 'Old Farnley' is made up of council, privately rented and back-to-back terraced houses with no green areas, gardens or fences. The ethnicity of the area is predominantly of White British heritage, although more Eastern European families are settling into the area. On the edge of the centre's reach area is a permanent camp site for Travellers.

Farnley is extremely hilly which poses severe issues for families without transport. All of the significant services that families need are located in surrounding areas to which there are very few direct bus routes. Twenty four per cent of the working population receive benefits in the most deprived areas compared to 10% in the more affluent areas. Children enter early years provision with skills below those expected for their age, particularly in relation to their communication and social skills.

The centre is governed by the local authority through the Farnley cluster and has an advisory board made up of representatives from the local community, parents and partner professionals.

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

Farnley Children's Centre is a good centre with good services and provision. The evaluation of services is effective in identifying strengths and key areas for improvement. The well-targeted actions and subsequent improvements over the last year demonstrate a good capacity for sustained improvement. The centre works particularly well with partners to highlight key target groups and is good at taking a multifaceted, joined up approach to tackling the challenging needs that some families have in the reach area. Services match the needs of families well and are developed by the good use of feedback from families. The advisory board supports and helps to steer the strategic direction of the centre but parental involvement is not consistent. Up-to-date comprehensive data for the board are not always available to them. The local authority is about to launch a new monitoring system that collates all relevant data in a more accessible format.

Safeguarding is given a high priority and families feel safe and secure in all the venues used by the centre. Risk assessments are extremely robust and the centre recognises the importance of this in view of all services being delivered within the community. Parents and children feel safe at venues used by the centre. Partnership working ensures an accurate and effective assessment of needs of families and the protection of children. The centre knows its families well and has engaged with a large majority of the most vulnerable

families, helping them to improve their outcomes with good services and well-targeted outreach work.

Children make good progress relative to their starting points. Adults and children really enjoy the activities on offer and develop their personal, social and parenting skills well. The good partnership arrangements ensure families are given all-round well-coordinated support and guidance. Families are being supported to improve their economic well-being through debt, housing and financial advice. Some go on to further training and employment.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure the advisory board fully challenges and directs the centre to improve its effectiveness even more by:
 - ensuring all parents are aware and understand the purpose of the advisory board as well as increasing the number who participate
 - provide regular up-to-date evaluative reports to the advisory board members.
- Use data to further monitor and demonstrate outcomes more effectively by:
 - introducing an effective monitoring system
 - ensuring that the challenge and support meetings between the local authority and the centre include all relevant data.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Children make good progress; the number of children gaining at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage has risen from 52% in 2009/10 to 61% in 2010/11. In particular, children from more deprived areas and looked after children are targeted and all show good improvement to at least expected levels for their age from low-level starts. Boys tend to do less well than girls but the gap is narrowing. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% has closed from 21% to 16%. Good transition arrangements are in place. Adults improve their parenting skills as well as their personal and social skills. The opportunities to play in groups such as 'messy play' give a great deal of fun and enjoyment to families. During sessions, parents share any concerns they may have and get individual support to get more involved in their children's learning and development.

Parents receive free resources and safety checks in their homes which improve their safety awareness. Parents feel able to share with staff any concerns they may have. A comment such as, 'They have become like friends to me and my partner', is a typical reflection of the good relations between staff and families. A large majority of families with child protection plans or those subject to the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) have shown improvement and nearly 20% of child protection plans have now ceased. The centre works closely with the local community police and the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Group to respond effectively to cases of domestic abuse. Crime and anti-social behaviour have

reduced in the area and parents feel safer when visiting a local park as a result of recent safety initiatives.

Children behave well and show good development of positive relationships. The extremely friendly, positive and professional approach by centre staff has helped to encourage mutual respect between parents. Parents are active on the advisory board and all parents using the centre services give their views and suggestions. Some parents have been encouraged to become volunteers with some going on to gain employment. Opportunities for accredited learning with a local college are being developed and taken up by some parents. Parents attend family learning to help develop literacy and numeracy skills. Some families are helped by the centre to find employment.

Health outcomes are improving and developing as more families are engaged with the services of the children's centre. There is a well-established support group for breastfeeding and a more recently set up baby feeding group that encourages an inclusive approach to all mothers regardless of how they choose to feed their baby. Although obesity levels are not particularly high for those entering Reception, the centre is still working with partners to address the striking upward trend of obesity in older children. Local initiatives run at the centre were very well received and resulted in families cooking more fresh food and eating more fruit and vegetables. There is a counselling service which is used by both mothers and fathers resulting in improved emotional well-being for those using the service. There is currently no initiative to promote smoke free homes.

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	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 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.	3

How good is the provision?

2

There is a good range of services that respond to the needs of families and in particular to those in target groups. The centre knows its families well and there has been a 50% increase of registered families over the last six months. Face to face contact has tripled. All parents accessing free childcare also attend at least one group or set of activities. At least

half, but usually more, of the places taken up for activities are from families living in the most deprived areas. The increase in registration has been greatest in those areas where there are vulnerable families. Good partnerships are in place to deliver the required services.

The centre works well with local schools, community venues and a church to deliver services and these are situated very conveniently for families to use. They are well resourced and set up to make a welcoming environment that encourages take-up of services. Activities are of a good quality and are carefully planned and promoted to appeal to the local community. The Early Years Foundation Stage principles are embedded in all the learning activities. The interests of children are used to develop activities including the different interests of boys and girls. The quality of childcare is good and the progress children make in their learning and development is tracked to monitor rates of progress and outcomes. Families are supported back into work through the centre's partnership with Jobcentre. Of those who have attended appointments, 50% have had a successful outcome, moving into training or employment. The centre is proactive in supporting users into employment. One example is its current dialogue with the local college to provide support for parents competing for jobs.

The quality of care and guidance is particularly good and well coordinated between partners. Support is extremely effective for families in crisis and those who are most vulnerable. A comment such as, 'Staff are very warm and friendly and completely non-judgemental, they could not have done more, they have been brilliant', is typical of the experience of parents. A professional using the centre also commented, 'Everything is in place to make parents feel comfortable'. One partner offers support for families needing intensive, specialist support such as for those who are having difficulty bonding with, and caring for their children. The centre receives many enquiries from families about a range of matters including childcare and offers appropriate advice through the wide range of information available.

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

Highly committed staff are extremely well led by a dynamic, clearly focused manager. A very clear set of priorities and targets are understood well by staff and partners. There is a continuous review of how well services are working and users contribute to the self-evaluation which in turn informs planning. Some data from the local authority required for evaluation are limited. Governance arrangements are clear, well established and promote effective cluster and partnership working. The advisory board and local authority support

and challenge the centre to secure further improvements. More recently, participation at meetings has not been well represented by parents; the centre has identified other partners who would make valuable input to the advisory board and has yet to act on this. Value for money is good, particularly in view of managing resources across the community as the centre does not have its own accommodation other than a central office and very small community room.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding and as a minimum receive monthly supervision. Managers have been proactive in supporting families affected by a recent report in the media of child abuse in the area. The recruitment of staff is particularly effective in ensuring staff have the right values and attitudes to work with children and families as well as the required skills and experience.

The centre is extremely proactive in identifying potentially excluded groups and those who may need specialist support. This has included careful research to identify the range of disabilities in the reach area. In partnership with the Child Development Unit, the centre ensures that services meet families' individual needs. A group of Roma Travellers on the outskirts of the reach area has been identified as a group with specific support needs and the centre works well with a partner to ensure ongoing engagement. A significant number have attended family learning provision. The engagement of lone parents, teenage mothers, those with disabilities and fathers have all increased. Fathers make up 28% of those attending groups. Parents are supported well in their advisory role and free crèche facilities are available for those taking part.

Partnership arrangements are strong and secure good and improving outcomes for families. Service level agreements are well written and used effectively to ensure effective service and outcomes for families. There are very good arrangements with the network of childminders who receive very good training and support and are also very active in helping to develop services. There are very supportive links between management of the host school and the centre. They share information on vulnerable families and help with early intervention for younger siblings when appropriate.

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

Information from the concurrent Ofsted inspection of Lawns Park Primary School has been taken into account when writing about early years' provision and outcomes for children in the report.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Farnley Children's Centre on 7 and 8 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we evaluated your centre's work and the quality of its resources, as well as its plans and documents. We talked to a number of you and the professionals who work with you. We found that the number of families using the centre's services has increased significantly in the last year. Overall, you are very pleased with the services on offer and you also have the opportunity to contribute your thoughts and suggestions as to how the centre is run.

Your centre has been particularly good at reaching out to those of you who need most help and support, whether that is because of financial difficulties, personal and family issues or wanting the opportunity to help and understand how to support your children's learning and development. You really enjoy the activities the centre arranges. At the 'come dine with me' sessions you learnt much about healthy eating and 'messy play' sessions provided fun time and more ideas of the sort of activities your children can enjoy at home. For those of you who have had times of crisis your centre has been invaluable in terms of the help and support it has given. You find the staff warm, friendly and professional at all levels.

Your centre manager continuously endeavours to improve the service to you and is very focused on ensuring the venues you use are safe and secure. You told us that you feel safe, you have increased your awareness of safety in the home and that you very much appreciate some of the free safety resources. Your centre works really well with many partners who are able to offer you specialist support such as helping with debt or financial worries or finding work.

Children make good progress in their learning. All activities are carefully planned to include the full range of skills required by your children. Your centre takes care to listen to what your children like to do so it can make activities as appealing as possible to them. Some of your children have access to childcare at a nursery or another local children's centre but your centre makes sure it continues to monitor your child's progress and that the childcare they are receiving is good. Your centre also has really good working relationships with local childminders. These childminders receive good levels of training and support to make sure they are giving children a quality service.

You are engaging well with health services and the centre now has a presence at health centres to make sure that you are aware of their services. They work hard at trying to promote healthy living and have recently set up a baby feeding group to make sure you all feel welcome to attend regardless of whether you have chosen to breastfeed or not. Staff are working with the health services to address the growing obesity levels of older children. Your centre makes sure you have access to a counselling service to help improve emotional well-being.

Although your centre operates from an office and small room in a local primary school, it has managed to bring the services to you at venues you prefer and find easy to access. You appreciate the resources the centre is able to put into the venues and provides for you to use in the home such as toys and books. Your centre is good at making the most of its resources. Your centre continuously evaluates how well it is doing and uses your feedback well to feed into its evaluation and to plan services. The centre does not always get all the data it needs from the local authority to see how it is doing against targets set. Most of you we spoke to did not know about the advisory board and how it works in challenging and steering the children's centre. We have asked your centre to improve the way it manages the advisory board membership to make sure you have the opportunity to take an active part in it. We have also asked your centre and the local authority to improve the data they collect and use for evaluation.

Thank you very much for your welcome and for your frankness with inspectors. We are very grateful and wish you every success in the future.

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