

# The Avenues Children's Centre

Sixth Avenue, York, North Yorkshire, YO31 0UT

**Inspection date** 15–17 January 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Good	2
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	2
Access to services by young children and families		Good	2
The quality of practice and services		Good	2
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Good	2

## Summary of key findings for children and families

### This children's centre group is good.

- Good partnership working, strong management and effective strategies ensure that a good balance of open-access and targeted services meet the needs of most local families well. As a result, a large majority of families from almost all target groups are registered with the centre and make use of the good quality provision on offer.
- Take-up of the entitlement to free early education across the locality is very high. Children who attend the centre are prepared well for school.
- Safeguarding is well prioritised and staff work closely with key partners to safeguard vulnerable children and adults. Timely, robust assessment leads to good early intervention and support.
- Well qualified and experienced practitioners have high aspirations and ambitions for the families they serve.
- Parents are engaged well in the shaping, delivery and evaluation of centre services.
- Resources are used extremely well. A healthy number of volunteers deliver an increasing number of open access activities enabling centre staff to focus their attention on delivering targeted provision and supporting those families with greatest need.

### It is not outstanding because:

- The centre is not able to fully demonstrate the impact of all aspects of its work on children and families because it is not yet being provided with all the data and information needed from health and adult learning partners.
- The engagement of a small number of target groups, such as fathers, is low.
- Much of the planning documentation and performance data developed over the past year requires reviewing and refining. New systems need time to embed.

### **Information about this inspection**

The inspection of this children's centre group was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

One team of five inspectors carried out the inspection of The Avenues Children's Centre and of the Knavesmire and St Lawrence's Children's Centre group at the same time. This is because these centres work together collaboratively to develop and deliver services for children and families who live in the City of York - South East locality.

This inspection was carried out by three of Her Majesty's Inspectors and two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre managers, centre staff, officers from the local authority, health and education professionals, parents, volunteers and representatives of the advisory boards for The Avenues and the Knavesmire and St Lawrence's. The inspectors undertook two observations of centre activities jointly with centre managers and visited a temporary housing hostel where some activities are delivered off-site.

Inspectors observed the centres' work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including self-evaluation forms, development planning and data, a sample of case studies and case files, parental satisfaction surveys and consultations, programme evaluations and a range of policies and procedures including those related to safeguarding.

### **Inspection team**

Wendy Ripley, Lead Inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Mike White	Her Majesty's Inspector
Linda Mclarty	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Pepper	Additional Inspector
Jackie Philips	Additional Inspector

## Full report

### Information about the centre

The Avenues Children's Centre is located in the City of York – South East locality and delivers services for families who live in this area collaboratively with the Knavesmire and St Lawrence's Children's Centre group. The centre works with partners to deliver a mixture of open-access 'universal' provision and targeted services. The full core offer is provided through social care, the traveller service, family play and education sessions, parenting programmes, adult education and health services such as speech and language therapists, midwives and health visitors. Outreach work takes place with families in their own homes and through a satellite centre in Osbaldwick, which was closed for refurbishment at the time of this inspection. The centre is managed directly by the local authority. It has its own advisory board to oversee the running of the centre.

The Avenues serves around 1200 children under five years of age living in communities including Tang Hall, Dunnington, Osbaldwick and Stockton on Forest. The centres reach area is ranked within the 70% most deprived areas nationally. However, within this, the number of children living in a 30% most deprived area is the highest of all the City of York's children's centres and it has the only area in the City of York falling within the 10% most deprived category. The level of worklessness and of families claiming benefits is relatively high compared to the City of York overall. Most families are of White British heritage. The main priority groups have been identified by the centre as children living in families that have low incomes, children from the traveller community, children classified as in need or with a child protection plan, families who are homeless, and teenage parents.

The Avenues is co-located with a wide range of support services, a pupil referral unit for primary age children and Tang Hall Primary School (URN 121468). Early years provision is provided through a number of early years settings, school nursery classes and child-minders within the locality. Children generally enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age. The primary schools and nearby early years settings were not part of this inspection as they are inspected separately. Their inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website at <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk>.

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

- The local authority should work strategically with health and education partners to ensure that the full range of data is available to the centre so that the impact of all the services provided can be monitored and measured.
- Increase the registration and participation of the small number of target groups, such as fathers, where current engagement is low.
- Review and refine systems, documentation and performance data in order to sharpen decision making and performance monitoring further and provide more user friendly analyses of outcomes showing trends over time and the impact of the provision.
- Build on the good work already being done to help parents understand how their children learn and develop, for example, by providing more training and development for volunteers so that they can provide peer support confidently and ensuring parents get the most out of their child's learning journal – the 'big red book'.

## Inspection judgements

### Access to services by young children and families

Good

- The skilled and conscientious centre staff together with partners work well to develop a good understanding of the most significant areas of need in the community and identify and register families, particularly those most vulnerable. Centre workers target support and advice appropriately and effectively to meet individual family's needs. This has resulted in a three year increasing trend with the large majority of families now taking-up the services provided by the centre and its partners. Centre staff work hard to further increase participation of those groups where engagement is lower, such as fathers.
- The friendly and very welcoming centre provides a good range of information for families on all aspects of safety, care and education. Referrals, universal services and targeted services effectively identify needs and match families to the services they require. Timely, robust assessment of children leads to good early intervention and support. The centre provides a good balance of universal and targeted services. Strategies to contact any registered families not attending services are effective. Adult learning is planned well to provide opportunities across the locality.
- Case files and case studies provide compelling evidence of the centre's effective work with target groups and successful integrated multi-agency partnership working. Staff are skilled at sensitively assessing and identifying risks and they respond well to reduce them. Families are matched well to the services they need ensuring the 'right services for the right child'.
- The take-up of funded early education places for eligible two-year-olds is very high as a result of effective joint working with health visitors to check children's progress at two years of age. All eligible funded two-year-old children have a place in settings judged to be at least good. The take up of funded three- and four –year-old places is also very high. Not all funded three- and four-year-olds are placed in settings which have been judged by Ofsted to be good or better, but use of such settings is carefully evaluated on a case by case basis with careful tracking and support for those children.

### The quality of practice and services

Good

- Children's centre staff have high aspirations and ambitions for the children and families using their services and the children are at the heart of all decision making. The large number of co-located partners makes the centre a real hub for the community being served and enables strong partner delivery of services. The 'celebration file' indicates parents appreciation of the care, guidance and support they receive with comments such as 'your never-ending support, advice and welcoming smiles are invaluable to new mums'.
- Healthy numbers of volunteers help empower parents and enable the good range of open-access and universal sessions to be provided. Generally high quality play sessions and access to a varied range of very good toys and educational resources prepare children well for their entry into school. However, some planning for sessions is too informal and in a minority of instances this leads to poor time management or lack of clear objectives. The 'big red books' that staff have introduced for parents to record their children's learning and play activities are proving popular with parents but how parents complete these and the usefulness of the information in them varies considerably. Staff are currently not maximising the benefits or the opportunities the 'big red book' provides for them to help parents understand how children's learning can be reinforced, extended and continued at home and to find out about the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Strong links with the primary school and work with the qualified early years link teacher – the Early Learning Leader, ensures that the attainment and progress of children using the centre is being tracked carefully from entry to school-based provision through to their Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores. Consequently, reliable data show that overall, a greater proportion of children from families using children's centre services enter school-based provision

with the skills and knowledge typical of children their age than the children of families who are not engaged with the centres. This data also shows that the achievement gap between the lowest performing 20% of children and their peers is narrower than it is nationally.

- The culture of safeguarding and health is well embedded and the centres work collaboratively with health partners to provide a good range of services and activities to ensure the well-being of children and families. Breast feeding peer support is strong and is a priority for continued development. High quality displays provide good health and safety information. Visits to families' homes are used effectively to further develop parents' understanding of their responsibilities for their child's safety and well-being. However, a lack of health data at locality level impacts on the ability of the centre to measure the success of these good activities.
- Family learning courses are planned well to hook parents into learning by linking activities with supporting child development or addressing personal issues, such as healthy eating or financial management. Most courses developing employability skills, such as English and mathematics, lead to nationally recognised qualifications. However, data on the success of these courses has only recently been systematically collected and reported to measure their impact although this limited data does indicate good success and progression for the learners in autumn 2013.

### **The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management**

Good

- Centre managers across the locality work extremely well together and are passionate about their work, well qualified and demonstrate significant knowledge and expertise about early childhood. This permeates and underpins all of the centres' activities and results in bright lively environments, where high quality displays and resources and welcoming staff are used effectively to engage families, provide information advice and guidance and promote the health and well-being of young children and families extremely well. All staff have relevant qualifications at an appropriate level for the services being delivered and they undertake a significant number of training and development activities that are linked closely to their roles and responsibilities.
- The centre provides a welcoming and professional environment for the families using it and the good attendance at the centre provides a vibrant feel. Good partnership working across the locality contributes to the efficient and effective utilisation of resources. The use of volunteers and parent helpers is an effective strategy ensuring that centre staff are used where most needed while maintaining the balance and range of open-access and targeted provision. Consultation with parents is very effective and used to provide challenges to the managers and advisory board and to shape the services being delivered.
- The local authority provides a strong strategic steer and is committed to delivering services and early intervention through its children's centres. A multi-agency Children's Trust Board (CTB) has been retained and a city-wide children's centre project board reports regularly to the CTB. Since being appointed 15 months ago, the centre manager has worked hard to reinvigorate the advisory board which now has good representation from the local community and partner organisations. The board has a good understanding of its role to support and challenge the centre and a clear view of the strengths and areas for further improvement.
- The welfare of children is at the forefront of the centre's purpose. Across the locality the culture of safeguarding is well embedded and underpinned by robust policies and good procedures and practices. City-wide training promotes consistency well, particularly the completion of high quality case files which are completed to a good standard. A high percentage of high quality CAFs are led by centre staff and the number of re-referrals have decreased. Centre staff use self-audit procedure and staff supervision well to maintain consistently high quality records. The centre works collaboratively with partners to reduce the risk of harm to children successfully. Complaints are investigated thoroughly and centre leaders are clear on their responsibilities to inform ISA if they believe anyone is unsuitable to work with children.
- Many aspects of quality assurance activity and performance management have been revised over the last year. The local authority has commissioned an external consultant to undertake

independent thematic reviews to provide support and challenge for all children's centres. Many of these developments do show clear intent to design and implement tools to monitor and measure impact of services/outcomes of services users but it is too early to judge the full impact. However, the centre recognises that it now needs to review these developments to ensure that all reports are user friendly and show performance trends over time.

**What inspection judgements mean**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Judgement</b>	<b>Description</b>
Grade 1	Outstanding	Practice consistently reflects the highest aspirations for children and their families and as a result inequalities are reducing rapidly and gaps are closing.
Grade 2	Good	Practice enables most children and their families to access good quality services that improve children's wellbeing and achieve the stated outcomes for families.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	Performance is not as good as it might reasonably be expected to be in one or more key areas.
Grade 4	Inadequate	The needs of children and families in its area are not being met and/or the leaders and managers are not providing sufficient challenge to bring about improvement to the quality of services.

**Children's centre details**

<b>Unique reference number</b>	23152
<b>Local authority</b>	City of York
<b>Inspection number</b>	421513
<b>Managed by</b>	The City of York local authority
<b>Approximate number of children under five in the reach area</b>	1185
<b>Centre leader</b>	Angela Charlesworth
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Telephone number</b>	01904 551250
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