

Gipton Children's Centre

Thorn Walk, Gipton, Leeds, West Yorkshire LS8 3LP

Inspection date 11–12 February 2014

Overall effectiveness	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	Previous inspection:	Not previously inspected	
Access to services by young children and families		Requires improvement	3
The quality of practice and services		Requires improvement	3
The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for children and families

This is a centre that requires improvement. It is not good because:

- Recent improvements to the quality and consistency of the leadership and management of the centre are not yet embedded. Staff value the support and challenge they now receive from the centre leader and are optimistic this will continue.
- Improvement targets are not sufficiently precise and measurable. As a result the centre cannot evaluate and demonstrate robustly how the services and activities it provides are improving the lives of children and their families.
- The advisory board is not always provided with sufficient support, training, data and information to enable it to challenge and monitor the centre's performance effectively. In addition, too few parents are enabled to contribute more formally to the governance and decision-making of the centre.
- Too few children are reaching their full potential and sufficiently prepared for school. Staff have developed processes to support and demonstrate children's learning and development better, to reduce these inequalities, but these have yet to be embedded.
- Leaders and staff are not sufficiently monitoring the participation of families in the centre services and activities. Where families' attendance fluctuates and they show signs of disengaging, this is not sufficiently followed up to encourage them to remain involved for as long as they need it.

This centre has the following strengths:

- Families who access the centre services and activities receive very good care, guidance and support. The team of family outreach workers is enthusiastic and dedicated to improving the lives of families and does so with success. This is highly valued by parents who summarised; 'The family outreach workers are a lifeline' and 'I feel safe here. I can tell the staff anything'.
- Very strong partnership-working ensures direct lines for information-sharing and joint provision of services and activities. As a result, families who professionals have identified as most vulnerable swiftly receive the support they need. This fully promotes their safety and welfare.

Information about this inspection

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

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

The inspectors held meetings with parents, staff, partners, the senior leadership team and representatives from the advisory board and local authority.

The inspectors visited each of the two sites where services are delivered.

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

Inspection team

Rachael Flesher	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sue Pepper	Additional inspector
Jean Webb	Additional inspector

Full report

Information about the centre

Gipton Children's Centre is a stand-alone centre and serves the compact inner city area of Gipton, within the Harehills district of Leeds. It provides services from two sites approximately one mile apart and covers a radius of 2.2 miles.

The centre meets its core purpose by offering a range of services which include: health services, family play sessions, parenting courses, adult learning and family support. These services are delivered to families from the children's centre buildings and through outreach home visits.

In total, 1,560 children under five years of age live in the area, which is one of the 30% most deprived areas in the country. Of these, 82.3% live in one of the 10% most deprived areas in the country. There are approximately 290 lone-parent families, 179 children living in workless households and 12% of families are claiming benefits in the reach area. The vast majority of families living in the area are White British and 20% of families are from minority ethnic groups with 11 different home languages. The centre has seen a small, but increasing number of migrant families from Eastern Europe who do not speak English moving into the area. The large majority of families lives in social housing or private rented accommodation. The target groups identified by the centre are children from low income backgrounds, children in need or with a child protection plan, families allocated to centre through referrals and minority ethnic groups including Gypsy Roma Traveller families.

The centre is managed by Leeds City Council. The centre has its own advisory board and parents are consulted through a range of forums. Most children enter early years provision with skills, knowledge and abilities below those expected for their age. There is registered early years provision on both sites which are subject to separate inspections and their reports can be found on the Ofsted website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

- Improve leadership and management so it is consistently good by:
 - fully embedding the good start already made by the centre leader to improve her performance and that of the centre
 - setting precise and measurable performance targets, against national standards where applicable, to evaluate and demonstrate robustly how the centre is improving the lives of children and families
 - providing the advisory board with support, training, data and information to enable it to challenge the centre's performance effectively
 - enabling more parents to contribute to the governance and decision-making process of the centre.

- Embed observational assessment and planning processes, and improve the quality of groups and activities for young children and their parents, to support more children at risk of underachieving to be ready for school and reach their full potential.

- Improve methods for monitoring attendance and participation and target accordingly, to encourage more families to sustain their engagement for as long as they need it.

Inspection judgements

Access to services by young children and families

Requires improvement

- Current systems for monitoring attendance and participation are not sufficiently developed. They do not ensure that staff target all families that fail to participate regularly. Consequently, not enough families are being supported and enabled to access the groups and activities regularly until their needs are met effectively.
- Family outreach workers are regularly out in the Gipton area promoting the centre services. They know the community well and have identified those families in most need of their support and intervention. However, the centre leader has not used this information sufficiently when identifying targets to monitor, evaluate and promote their engagement.
- The local authority has secured good processes for partners to share key data and information about families in the area with the centre. In addition, staff and leaders have developed very effective partnership-working with a range of professionals. As a result, all families are registered with the centre and a sound number, including those from minority ethnic groups, are accessing the services and activities.
- Outreach workers are used effectively to engage with some of those families the centre has identified as in most need of their support and intervention through prioritising their time to provide home visits and individual support.
- The views and needs of families are identified well through the referral and allocation process and consultations with families. These are used meaningfully to ensure that services and activities are what families need and want most.
- A good and improving number of families with children entitled to receive free early education for their two-, three- and four-year-olds are taking up their place. Staff and partners support parents to value early education and secure a suitable place.

The quality of practice and services

Requires improvement

- Not enough young children in the area are achieving a good level of development and the gap between the lowest-achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest is too wide.
- Family outreach workers do not currently have the leadership and support of a children's centre teacher to ensure that they are fully promoting the learning and development of young children. They are unaware of those aspects of the Early Years Foundation Stage in which children in school are achieving less well to address accordingly.
- Staff have recently started to record and track the learning and development of children in groups. They have begun to use this information to demonstrate how children have been supported to make progress, reduce inequalities and narrow the achievement gap. However, this is not embedded and the centre cannot demonstrate robustly the difference they are making to children's school-readiness.
- Family outreach workers are passionate about implementing changes to improve practice. Good procedures are in place for encouraging home learning through parent-friendly leaflets.
- Not enough health targets set by the local authority and the children's centre are met, but they are improving. Fewer children are obese and more mothers are sustaining breastfeeding.
- Families are highly satisfied with the quality of services at the centre and feel welcome and valued. As some parents summarised; 'I would recommend the centre to others because of the support they have given me', 'There is a fantastic atmosphere, it's inviting. I feel like I belong', and 'Staff are very friendly and approachable'.
- The allocations process and strong partnership-working ensures that very effective information-sharing and assessments of needs of families are robust. All families identified as in most need of support and intervention swiftly receive the help they need, to improve their life chances from a range of professionals as required.
- Staff consult well with parents regarding their learning and development needs and successfully arrange high quality courses that interest them. They particularly value the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and sewing group which are both well-attended. These courses build confidence and adults are supported and signposted to further progression routes.
- Staff work with a broad range of partners to support those adults who are ready to progress to

work. Colleagues from the Job Centre respond well to requests for advice and guidance. Partners advise and arrange childcare for those training or wanting to start work. Some adults have secured suitable employment as a result.

The effectiveness of leadership, governance and management

Requires improvement

- The local authority's performance monitoring procedures ensure that weaknesses in the centre leadership and management are identified and addressed. The leader has been supported very well to work towards meeting the required improvement targets. However, these improvements are very recent and have yet to be embedded to secure consistency.
- Self-evaluation systems are not sufficiently rigorous. Targets set by the centre manager and the local authority are not highly challenging and easily measurable and are not always comparable to national standards, where applicable.
- The support, training, data and information provided to the advisory board by leaders do not always enable members to challenge the centre's performance confidently and robustly. A good number of parents are members of the advisory board, but there are limited opportunities for others to contribute to the governance and decision-making process formally, for example through a parents' forum.
- Staff are supported by the centre manager through supervisions and appraisals, through which they are beginning to be challenged and held to account. They have good access to a range of training and support to promote their professional development and enable them to carry out their roles effectively.
- The centre leader has a clear understanding of how to monitor and identify the quality and impact of staff delivering groups to support children's learning and development. Plans are in place to build on this by observing staff periodically and supporting improvements accordingly.
- Strong partnership-working, and clear and effective policies and procedures ensure that the centre is working collaboratively to support looked-after children, children identified as in need and children subject to a child protection plan and Common Assessment Framework (CAF) processes. This ensures that children and families receive swift and timely support from the range of professionals required. However, the quality of record-keeping in case files is variable.
- The centre provides a good balance of universal and targeted services that are matched to the needs of families in the area. The views of families are used well to shape services. However, the range of groups and provision is limited and the community rooms are not being utilised well, restricting the opportunities for more families to engage with the centre.

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
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

Unique reference number	21253
Local authority	Leeds
Inspection number	430156
Managed by	The local authority

Approximate number of children under five in the reach area	1560
Centre leader	Debra Gedge
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Telephone number	0113 240 5168
Email address	Debra.Gedge@leeds.gov.uk

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