

Inspection report for Siddal Children's Centre

Local authority	Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council
Inspection number	362567
Inspection dates	24-25 November 2010
Reporting Inspector	Sheila Boyle

Centre governance	Sub-committee Siddal Primary School's governing body
Centre leader	Andrea Briggs
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Blackhold Lane Siddal Halifax HX3 9DL
Telephone number	01422 354976
Fax number	01422 356454
Email address	andrea.briggs@calderdale.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Siddal Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Siddal Day care EY337796

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.

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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector. Another additional inspector attended for training purposes. The inspectors held meetings with the senior leadership team, a representative from the local authority, representatives from the governing body, health services, frontline workers and parents and other users of the centre's facilities. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Siddal Children's Centre which opened in 2006 on the outskirts of Halifax, serves several small settlements in semi-rural locations. The main settlements are Siddal, Exley, Salterhebble, Southowram, Copley, Saville Park and Skircoat Green. The centre reach area contains parts that are both advantaged and significantly disadvantaged. The community served by the children's centre is culturally diverse and this is reflected in the ethnic mix of children and families accessing the children's centre. The largest of these groups are of White British heritage. Employment rates are below the local and national average with many families having a variety of benefits as their main source of income. Most children enter childcare and early education with a narrower range of skills and abilities than that expected for their age.

The children's centre is located at Siddal primary school, the accommodation consists of a community room, a health room, a small kitchen and a quiet room for community use. The centre's day care is integrated with the school's Foundation Stage, where it has its own well-resourced room for the nought to three years group and another room for the pre-school children. To meet demand for training sessions, the local church hall and rugby club are used as additional venues. The centre benefits from being part of a cluster model made up of individual children centres. Most of the staff including the manager work in more than one centre. This is a

phase one children's centre, the local authority has commissioned a sub-committee of the school's governing body including the headteacher to manage the children's centre. An advisory board with representatives from the local community oversees the work of the centre. The children's centre provides the full core offer of services; it is one of eight centres within the Central Halifax Service Area. Crèche provision, group/sessions facilitators, family support and outreach are provided by a central team who are employed by Halifax Opportunities Trust. Health visitors, midwives, a community nursery nurse and speech and language therapists also provide services from the children's centre but none of these are co-located on the centre's site. There are seven primary schools and three secondary schools in the reach area. Partnerships between the centre, Siddal primary school and three other primary schools have been established. Planning permission has been granted for a satellite centre in the Southowram area which is approximately two miles away from the centre. This building is due to be completed in February 2011.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The support provided for children and their families is satisfactory overall with some good features. The impact of the support provided is at least satisfactory and for some who receive targeted support, outcomes are good. Children who attend the Busy Bees, the Bright Stars and the Referral crèches benefit particularly from focused support to develop their language, communication and emotional health and well-being. The support provided through health workers, outreach and family support workers further enhance this provision. The numbers accessing the centre have increased significantly over the past two years. The centre engages at some level with all 'looked after' children in its reach area. However, in spite of efforts made by the managers there are still a significant minority of vulnerable groups including families with children under five, single parents and those who abuse drugs and alcohol who do not take advantage of the centre's resources. Through the Jobcentre Plus initiative, a drop-in session was introduced recently but the uptake is very low at present. A number of parents/carers who have been helped by the centre told inspectors they would now like to attend training courses to help them gain

employment or a qualification and training to become a volunteer or special needs carer. The centre has acted on requests made by a few parents to provide activities during the school holidays for children with special needs and/or disabilities. Relationships with families who use the centre are good. Parents/carers appreciate the efforts made by staff to help them and their children. The view of one parent/carer typifies that of many, 'This centre provides a warm welcoming place for us and our children, I like coming here because staff are so helpful'.

Partnerships are satisfactory overall. Partnerships to promote safeguarding are good, and as a result, the procedures are robust and in line with local strategic plans. The inter-agency work with urgent referrals is effective because of good use of the Common Assessment Framework and the appointment of a lead professional to coordinate the support. Links with the school on site are strong; the recent section 5 Ofsted inspection of the school confirms that the children in the school's Early Years Foundation Stage department make good progress. This is due in part to the good foundations that are laid within the centre's day-care setting. Equality of opportunity and tackling discrimination is central to the work of the centre. To this end, a range of staff successfully work together to support the physical and emotional health and well-being of children and families. The centre is working on initiatives to improve services for children with special needs and/or disabilities. A suitable counselling service is in place for adults with mental health needs. .

The centre's judgment about its performance is generally accurate but not precise enough in some areas. There is insufficient evidence to show how the views of users and all professionals who work at the centre contribute to the review and evaluation of the centre's work. The action plan for the development of the centre has priorities based on data but the centre does not have enough information about the impact of trends over time of any intervention programmes for individuals nor does it yet seek impact data from all partners.

The head of centre and her team work purposefully together to raise the aspirations of users and contribute to the improvement of the quality of their lives. The advisory board and the local authority provide a range of support to the centre. Regular consultations take place to assess the work of the centre and they provide guidance in relation to the development of service and improvement plans. However, the quality and accuracy of self-assessment and the evaluation and interrogation of pertinent data are not sharp enough. This prevents the centre from demonstrating the full impact of its work.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes and provision by:

- developing a clearer model of self-review which takes account of all stakeholders and sets priorities for development which are based on performance data as well as key and national indicators
- improving the action plan so that the priorities for improvement have medium and longer term success criteria as well as timescales for review and evaluation
- strengthening efforts to identify, engage and assist more of the vulnerable groups not using the centres resources
- sharpening the way in which the local authority and the advisory board act as critical friends in challenging and holding the centre to account for its performance.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Evidence through case studies, discussion with key staff and parents indicate a positive impact of the multi-disciplinary approach to promoting children's and families' emotional well-being and their physical health. Data show that this has been successful with several families and has resulted in an increase in the number of mothers breast feeding, a significant increase in the uptake of immunisations and a reduction in the percentage of mothers smoking during pregnancy. The good attendance at crèche activities has resulted in key staff providing a range of programmes and advice aimed at improving the health of families, including advice on diet and on oral and dental hygiene. Exercise and nutrition activities for the Early Years programmes are beginning to impact on their attitudes to leading healthier lifestyles. Children attending the day-care provision appear to be relaxed and happy. One child spoken to when asked about feeling safe went and gave her key worker a cuddle. A number of the parents reported that they were able to 'get their life back on track' because of the advice and help they receive at the centre. Examples include: how help has been given to obtain rehousing; the setting up of holiday playschemes for children with disabilities; how parents have benefitted from attending counselling courses; and how parenting classes have helped them manage their children's behaviour. Outreach and family support workers work closely with families to prevent accidents in the home and raise families' awareness of safety. They are often instrumental in ensuring children's safety. When interviewed, they told of how they work with victims of domestic abuse to improve their lives.

Parents have limited opportunities to develop skills and improve their economic stability. A monthly drop-in session provided by Jobcentre Plus initiative has only recently been set up and the uptake is low. The centre recognises that this on its own is unlikely to meet the needs of the recent and long-term unemployed. It hopes to recruit volunteers and set up a club to help clients prepare curriculum vitae or gain the basic skills needed for employment.

The views of parents/ carers who use the centre are sought through questionnaires and discussions with staff and the centre leader when they attend activities and events. There are no parent/carers representatives on the governing body at present and parents/carers are not clear how their views contribute to the evaluation process.

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision making and governance of the centre	3
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?

3

The centre has established effective procedures for assessing the needs of children, parents/carers and families. Good working relationships between the different professionals ensure a coordinated and swift approach to supporting families in immediate crisis. The targeted work for urgent referrals is effective because of the appropriate use of the Common Assessment Framework and the appointment of a lead professional to coordinate the support. The highest uptake of services at the centre is linked to the activities for children between the ages of nought and five years. The close proximity of the school's early years provision together with the warm welcoming environment within the centre encourages some of the school's parents/carers to register, and go on to engage with some of its activities and services. Many families who do not attend the centre receive well-targeted support in their homes because outreach and family support workers respond promptly to referrals from outside agencies. In some instances this has had a positive impact for other providers. For example, school attendance of children improved when families received targeted support for other issues. Proactive partnerships with other providers including childminders, schools and health centres are broadly satisfactory. The centre has few activities for engaging teenage, single fathers or young carers apart from the annual events such as their Christmas and Summer fairs or fun days. No direct links have been set up between the centre and a local surgery where

counselling and rehabilitation services are provided for drug and alcohol abuse. The centre recently established links with the Child Development Unit at the local hospital and it hopes to provide support nearer home for any of those children who are from its reach. Services for those seeking training or help with debt are not readily available at this centre, although staff in some instances can signpost the way to these services in the community. The range of services is increasing in response to requests from parents and to a lesser extent through the centre's analysis of its current users and information gained from national data.

The care, guidance and support provided for children and parents and carers are satisfactory overall. They include support for parenting, one-to-one guidance and advice in the centre or at home, and a combination of family support and specialist health services. Annual fun days and summer fairs and trips during the holidays attract users to the centre. The centre effectively uses a common framework for assessing and tracking the progress of the children who attend all the early years settings. While information from the day care setting is passed on to the school at the end of the placement, information from the crèche's assessments is not passed on when the children transfer to their next stage of their learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
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	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Governance, management and accountability arrangements are clearly defined in the local authority's model of working but lines of accountability are less clear at the centre. All professionals understand their roles in providing integrated services and their performance is managed within their own discipline. Performance targets for individuals are not always linked to the centre's priorities for development and key national indicators and this restricts the management's ability to evaluate the centre's performance or give an accurate and up to date account of its achievements. The centre's action plan sets out priorities for improving the service and contains some data and performance indicators identified in the service level agreement with the local authority for 2005/06. However, since the plan has no criteria or timescales against which success could be measured, it does not show the progress made over time or the barriers which hinder progress. The management committee recognises that it does not make sufficient use of quantitative data or contributions from its

users and workers to evaluate the impact of its work.

The local community is well represented on the advisory board, although there is no parent representative at present. Procedures for holding the centre to account are through discussions with the centre managers and representatives from the local authority and from feedback on minutes from the governors meetings. However, a suitably analytical tool for measuring the centre's work to strengthen and develop the quality of provision is lacking. The day-to-day management of the centre runs smoothly and administrative staff play a key role in welcoming the children, parents and visitors. Equality and diversity are promoted successfully and this is reflected in the range of staff from different minority ethnic backgrounds who work at the centre and help to ensure that all children, parents and carers, regardless of their background differences, achieve well and have the same access to the services. Interpreters are provided for those who speak English as an additional language.

The centre has good arrangements for safeguarding all users. The vetting of staff is secure and relevant training is up to date. All staff are very aware of key policies and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential dangers that users may encounter. Suitable procedures and protocols for sharing information, together with good working relationships ensure that the needs of children and families at risk and in need are given a high priority. Staff have access to suitable training; many are undertaking further training to develop their skills and knowledge for the benefit of the centre. Accommodation and resources are used effectively to meet the needs of users and to ensure that the centre provides satisfactory 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	3
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
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	3
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 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	3

commissioned to provide	
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

The previous inspection report on Siddal Primary School, which was inspected in October 2010, was used 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 Siddal Children's Centre on 24 and 25 November 2010 and found it to be satisfactory.

Thank you to all of you who spoke with the inspectors. As well as talking with you we looked at the comments some of you have made about the service you receive. These were all very positive. We think that, comments like, 'I have got my life back together due to the support I received from staff at this centre,' sums up your opinions well. This is because the staff have great respect for you and your children and give you a warm welcome as well as the support and guidance you need to help you deal with your problems. They are particularly good at identifying services that will be most useful to you and if you cannot come to the centre the outreach and family support worker will come to you. It is good to know that more children in your area are being immunised and more women in your area are breastfeeding their babies for the first two months.

We know that you enjoy bringing you children to the Busy Bees and the Bright Stars sessions where you get a chance to meet other mums and dads in similar circumstances and or course you get a chance to speak to the health visitor or other professionals while staff look after your children. We are pleased that you feel so safe in the centre and are making sure your children are safe at home too. We know that those of you who attended parenting sessions are now more confident in

dealing with your children's behaviour. This means that both you and your children get on better and have less stressful lives. It is also good that some of you are now thinking of attending courses or pursuing training to help you get into employment. We know some of you would like to become volunteers at the centre. We hope the centre will soon be in a position to help you achieve your ambitions in these areas. We know that the staff seek your views from time to time on how to improve the service. It would be good if some of you could represent parents at governors meetings and let them know at first hand what parents think of the centre and how it could be improved. It is encouraging to know that the centre engages with all the children who are 'looked after' in your area and that the leaders are trying to contact those different groups in the local community who are not yet benefiting from the services on offer. The numbers of people who use the centre are going up and of course the school's outstanding report may attract more parents to the centre when they come to register their children for school. One of our responsibilities is to recommend to the centre how it may improve. We have asked the leaders to make sure that the number and variety of people who use the centre for different purposes increase. We have also asked leaders to seek the views of all who work and use the centre to help them plan for the development of the centre.

We wish you well in the future.

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