

Inspection report for Sure Start Children's Centre Hornsea

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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	118082 Hornsea School and Language College
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.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with parents and users of the centre, the centre's manager and staff, representatives from the local authority, members of the advisory board and various professionals who work in partnership with the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Sure Start Children's Centre Hornsea covers a large rural area in the East Riding of Yorkshire. Since December 2012 there has been an interim change to the centre's reach area, pending consultation regarding the organisation of children's centres in the local authority. The centre's geographical reach has doubled to almost 51 square miles, including the seaside town of Hornsea and surrounding villages of Atwick, Sigglethorne and Seaton, plus the recent additions of Aldbrough and Witherwick. There are 551 children under five years of age in the extended reach area.

This phase two centre, which was designated in February 2008, operates from a modular building on the site of Hornsea School and Language College. The school has no formal links with the centre as East Riding of Yorkshire Council retains governance of the centre. There is a joint advisory board for both Hornsea and Beeford Children's Centres.

Almost two thirds of families in the reach area live in the 30 – 40% most deprived areas in England. In Hornsea much of the employment is seasonal and low paid. One in four of the children under five live in households where no one is working. Families in the small local villages experience social isolation as transport links and local facilities are limited. The local population is transient, with many families moving within the area as well as those moving

into and out of the area. Almost all families are of White British heritage. When children enter early years provision their skills, knowledge and abilities are generally similar to or below those typical for their age.

A range of services are delivered from the centre by the children's centre team to meet the core purpose. These include play and learning sessions, specialist speech and language support, targeted support for families with circumstances that make them vulnerable and provision for disabled children and those with special educational needs. The Portage Service, health visitors and midwives provide services directly from the centre. The centre is not directly linked with any local childcare setting. A national childcare charity is contracted to provide crèche facilities.

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

Sure Start Children's Centre Hornsea provides good support and services for children and families. Despite its location on the outskirts of the town and the transient nature of the population, the centre has successfully established itself as a focal point in the community which parents know they can turn to for help and information at any time. Users, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, speak with high regard of the support and encouragement they have received from the knowledgeable and dedicated staff team. 'The centre is a lifeline for families' and 'I can't tell you just how much they actually did to help us' were typical comments from parents and partner agencies, demonstrating the importance of the centre to local families.

Provision is varied and provides a carefully considered balance of universal sessions and skilfully targeted support for specific groups. Determined endeavours by staff to promote the centre's services have resulted in a year-on-year increase in the number of families registered and participating in the broad range of activities on offer. Centre staff liaise closely with partner agencies to maintain a detailed understanding of the needs of local families and ensure services are well designed to promote continuous improvement in outcomes for children and families. Assessment of individual needs is a strength of the

centre, with staff demonstrating a sensitive awareness of how to best engage with, support and empower families during times of crisis and beyond. Young parents are catered for particularly well with a session that is thoughtfully timed to ensure they can continue their education and benefit from peer support.

The centre is making a discernible difference for children and families, particularly in promoting healthy lifestyles, improving emotional well-being and raising awareness of how to keep children safe. Sessions are well organised to provide progression for different ages and stages of children's health and development. The centre has successfully encouraged an increasing number of parents to participate in courses that they report improve their understanding of healthy eating, assist in managing their children's behaviour more confidently and increase their self-esteem. A few parents have gained employment following training courses and a small number have been assisted individually by centre staff to set up their own business and access higher education with confidence. However, there is not an established pathway for adults to develop skills, experience and accredited qualifications to support future employment.

The centre offers a broad range of activities to support children's learning and development. Sessions such as 'Babies Playing' are popular and enjoyed by all who attend. A wide variety of quality resources stimulate babies to develop their physical skills and explore their surroundings while parents appreciate the opportunity to cultivate social networks. Many play and learning sessions are planned carefully using the Early Years Foundation Stage framework but the quality of planning and the staff's evaluations of the impact of the sessions are inconsistent. The majority of parents attending 'Let's Get' sessions report a better understanding of their child's development and say that they have used activity ideas at home. However, planning documents and parents' feedback indicate that not all sessions support parents sufficiently well to increase their knowledge of how children learn or provide ideas to extend their learning at home. In addition, the centre is not yet able to demonstrate fully the impact it has on learning and development as it does not routinely track individuals' progress.

The centre is managed well and governance arrangements are clear, although the advisory board's role in improvement planning and holding the centre to account is currently under-developed. The local authority provides effective support and challenge by working with the centre to assess accurately the centre's strengths and identify pertinent priorities. The centre manager ensures staff action plans are well targeted to secure continuous improvement for local children and families. The manager and staff team exhibit a good knowledge of the families and use all available data and local intelligence from partner agencies to identify and address emerging needs. A wide range of techniques are used to gather users' views and there is obvious commitment to adapting and developing provision in response to feedback from families and partner agencies. As a result, the centre demonstrates good capacity to sustain improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve outcomes by:
 - ensuring that all play and learning sessions are of consistently high quality, increase parents' understanding of how their children learn and are designed to extend purposeful play into the home environment
 - establishing a learning pathway for adults to gain skills, experience and accredited qualifications to support their future employment prospects
 - implementing tracking systems to capture more effectively individual learning and use this information to inform future planning of courses and activity sessions.

- Strengthen the role of the advisory board in holding the centre manager to account by increasing members' involvement in setting and monitoring well-focused, ambitious targets for all aspects of the centre's work and engagement in development planning.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre has successfully established strong partnership working with local health professionals and a good range of child and family health services are delivered from the centre. These are well matched to the needs of the reach area and, as a result, there is good attendance at the child health clinics and very high immunisation rates. 'Bumps, Birth and Beyond' sessions for prospective, expectant and new parents ensure timely access to centre services and early intervention if additional support is required. 'Weaning Parties' provide an effective introduction to providing healthier meals. As a result, health outcomes are good and improving for many families, including the most vulnerable. Breastfeeding rates are increasing steadily, obesity levels of children at the end of Reception Year are below local and national averages and there is low incidence of mothers smoking while pregnant.

'Me Time' sessions promote parents' emotional well-being very effectively by providing time away from the children, while the 'Baby Massage' and 'Babies Playing' sessions were observed to foster good early communication and strengthen parent/baby relationships. Evaluations of the 'Family Links' courses demonstrate how these have helped to improve family life as parents identified that they now shout less and focus on praising their children's positive behaviour.

The centre places high priority on safeguarding. Users' evaluations show that the vast majority feel safe at the centre and report that children behave well during sessions. First aid courses, home safety assessments and centre sessions with a safety theme, such as car seat requirements, all help to raise parents' awareness of how to keep children safe. The centre receives good support from health professionals in ensuring safety equipment is accessible for use in the home. Data relating to emergency hospital admissions of children locally indicate few are caused by accidents or deliberate injuries. Users are confident to share safeguarding concerns with staff as relationships are strong and high levels of trust

have been established. Case studies demonstrate that well-organised, multi-agency support for families referred to the centre in times of acute crisis is helping to improve outcomes for children subject to a child protection plan and those deemed to be 'in need'.

Parents make positive contributions to the work of the centre as active volunteers in supporting delivery of sessions and introducing additional activities, such as gardening. Their development of a 'pizza garden' prompted other parents to consider what produce they could grow at home. Some volunteers have found new skills to change career and have gone on to access higher education. However, the centre is aware that it needs to develop further its volunteering programme. For example, the centre is unable currently to support users to become peer supporters to breastfeeding mothers due to lack of available training in the authority. Centre staff promote positive relationships between users effectively by encouraging them to set their own rules and boundaries. Young parents decide cooperatively what meal to cook and demonstrate efficiently their knowledge acquired at previous sessions of good hygiene practice and nutritionally balanced meals. Regular 'Stop and Chat' sessions provide parents with good opportunities to contribute to the running of the centre. As a result, 11 parents are now keen to join the recently reconstituted Parents' Forum which is due to meet shortly. Users' views are also well represented on the advisory board through the chair and vice-chair, who are both parents.

The centre links well with Jobcentre Plus and other agencies to inform adults of employment opportunities and local childcare options. Young parents receive direct support to encourage them to continue their education, access training or seek employment. Users benefitting from one-to-one support said that their economic stability and independence have improved as a result of their engagement with the centre, particularly in helping to manage their finances better. By offering childcare alongside a number of courses the centre has been successful in supporting an increasing number of parents to access training. However, there is not yet an established progression route from courses that support first steps back into learning to courses which enhance employment skills and offer accredited qualifications for users.

The centre has rightly recognised the need to concentrate on promoting children's communication and language skills and personal, social and emotional development, as locally these are low compared with other children of similar age. Early intervention strategies, such as 'Talk Time' sessions and the 'Bookstart' programme, are specifically targeted to improve children's communication and language skills. Parents report that their children are speaking more and have increased concentration following the sessions. The positive impact of other recent initiatives, such as support for families who have a funded place for their two-year-olds, is just starting to emerge. However, this work is not yet sufficiently well embedded to have narrowed the achievement gap for children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the centre does not track rigorously how effectively it is supporting learning for children and adults in order to be able to demonstrate fully the impact of its work or inform future planning.

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	3
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

Services are regularly reviewed and adapted to ensure that they continue to meet local needs, particularly for families with circumstances that make them vulnerable. Most families in the reach area are registered with the centre and the majority of these, including those in minority groups, access services regularly. Effective, joint working with other agencies leads to early identification of any additional needs and ensures that specialist support, if required, is in place prior to children starting school. Staff have determinedly used different approaches to engage with fathers as this work has been an ongoing challenge. Recent events, such as the 'Big Build' linked with the nursery school, have been more successful. Photographs record fathers and children purposefully collaborating in using recycled materials to build robots, a dolls' pram and a model of Buckingham Palace, achievements they were evidently proud of.

Centre staff's increased confidence in using the Common Assessment Framework procedures generates a caring but firm approach in empowering families to improve their lives without becoming over-reliant on support from the centre. Sensitive staff encourage parents to contribute to family action plans, designed with small steps that assist many families to achieve the desired improvements in their lives. The centre has gained a good reputation with partner agencies as staff reliably deliver high-quality care, guidance and support for families, particularly those most in need. Good links with local charities enable staff to provide immediate emergency support for families in extreme need by signposting to agencies who can supply food parcels and essential household items.

The centre is proactive in improving the provision of local childcare settings by extending their resources through the use of the centre's premises, equipment and loans from the toy library. Families with a disabled child are well supported with targeted sessions which offer peer support and access to centre resources. Attendance at courses is rewarded with

certificates and parents are encouraged to contribute to group learning journeys to celebrate their children’s achievements. Play and learning sessions are enhanced with informative input from the dental health team and road safety specialists. However, not all sessions maximise parents’ understanding of children’s development to extend their learning at home.

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	3
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 supportive and firmly committed to securing continuous improvement. Everyone involved in the centre shares a common goal to improve the lives of families in the reach area. The advisory board sets appropriate targets for registrations and participation levels and reviews users’ evaluations but is less well involved in critically analysing the centre’s performance and determining its future priorities. Nevertheless, the local authority provides very effective challenge. Leaders have a secure understanding of the centre’s achievements and priority areas for development. Specific targets, based on increasingly detailed scrutiny of the data and supported by comprehensive action plans, are well focused on improving outcomes for groups with circumstances that make them most vulnerable. Day-to-day management of the centre is good. Staff are deployed effectively with delegated responsibilities; they work well together, sharing their complementary skills and knowledge.

The centre demonstrates good value for money. Very efficient use is made of the premises in delivery of centre services and by partner agencies. Close partnership working ensures that the centre is well informed about local needs and that services are developed jointly to maximise their effectiveness. Children’s views, parents’ evaluations and attendance levels are regularly reviewed to ensure activities continue to meet users’ needs and, if not, sessions are adapted or discontinued. Users’ satisfaction levels are extremely high as the centre is making a positive difference for the majority of local families.

Equality and diversity are promoted satisfactorily. Each user is treated as an individual and with respect. The centre provides an inclusive approach for many users. Transport is provided for some families who are unable to get to the centre independently, disabled users are consulted regularly about their individual needs and other cultures are celebrated across the centre through involving users in delivery of sessions. Displays and information leaflets generally reflect the local community but an over-reliance on written text may

present a barrier for some users. The centre has rightly prioritised narrowing the achievement gap but recent initiatives to address children’s low levels of language and communication skills are only just beginning to demonstrate a positive impact.

Effective safeguarding procedures are in place. Safer recruitment policies and procedures of the local authority are followed in the appointment of staff. The centre has ensured all staff are subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks including those from other agencies who work with children at the centre. All staff have participated in safeguarding training at an appropriate level for their responsibility. The premises are safe, well maintained and secure. Clear health and safety policies and robust risk assessments, including input from users and partner agencies, further assure the safety of all involved in the centre.

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	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 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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Sure Start Children's Centre Hornsea on 9 and 10 January 2013. We judged the centre as good overall.

We were pleased to spend time at the centre looking at its work, visiting the sessions and meeting with some of you. We also met members of the centre staff team and other professionals who work with you.

Those of you we talked to and the staff from other agencies told us how important the centre is for you as you turn to it regularly when you need information. You described the centre as a 'lifeline' when things are difficult and explained how staff are very reliable in always being there for you whenever you need help. The staff have been very keen to promote the centre and their work has resulted in an increasing number of families being registered with the centre and using its services each year. Those of you from minority groups such as disabled parents and minority ethnic backgrounds are effectively encouraged to access the centre through involvement in risk assessments and sharing your cultural customs with other users.

A wide range of activities and services are offered, which are designed to support your families. This is possible because the staff work closely with other agencies to find out about your needs and are keen to hear your views through regularly asking what you think about the sessions you attend and talking to you at the 'Stop and Chat' sessions. The centre uses your views well to help it develop services and improve the way the centre works. It was good to hear that so many of you are now keen to join the 'Parents' Forum' and that parents are involved in the advisory board as the chair and vice-chair, which ensures that your views are well represented.

The centre is making a big difference in helping you and your families to be healthy, manage your children's behaviour and providing you with time away from your children when you need some 'Me Time' to help you cope with the pressures of being a parent. The centre is particularly good at supporting young parents. Sessions are very effectively timed to encourage them to continue their education and still be able to meet up with other young parents to support each other and develop new skills such as cooking a meal together. Encouraging fathers to be involved in the centre has been more of a challenge, but continued efforts have been successful. The photographs we saw showed how much you and your children had enjoyed the 'Big Build' session and we were impressed, as you obviously were, with your achievements in the models you had created.

The centre is good at helping you to keep your families safe, especially when you are experiencing a crisis in your lives. Staff are confident to work with you in a sensitive but firm way that helps you take responsibility for your family. They help to put together plans with small steps for you to take which will help improve your lives and those of your children. Most of you feel that you and your children are safe at the centre and are confident to share any worries you have with staff as they build good relationships with you. The centre is also

good at helping you to develop healthier lifestyles by breastfeeding your babies for longer and providing healthy meals for your family, starting with the 'Weaning Parties'.

We also found that many of you have attended courses which have helped your own learning and development, such as parenting programmes and first aid courses. The centre supports those of you who want to find work by advertising job vacancies and referring you to additional advice from Jobcentre Plus advisers. Some of you have undertaken training which has helped you find work and we heard how a small number of parents had been individually supported to set up their own business or change career as a result of a volunteering experience and go on to higher education. However, the centre does not have a clear pathway of support to help more of you prepare for work and does not look at the progress you make in the training you undertake to help plan your next steps in learning. We have asked them to improve this aspect of their work.

The centre provides a wide range of play and learning sessions where you enjoy playing with your children. We enjoyed watching your babies developing their physical skills and using the good-quality resources available, such as the sensory area, to explore their environment. Some of you felt that these sessions helped you to understand better how your children develop, but we could see from the planning that not all sessions were effective in developing your knowledge of how your children learn and some of you told us that you would like to have additional ideas to help extend your child's learning at home. We have asked the centre to make sure that all sessions are equally supportive in helping you to help your children to learn. The centre has recently provided some additional support for children whose language and communication skills are less well developed. You have said that this is helping your children speak more and develop better concentration. This is pleasing because these skills are really important in helping your children to make good progress when they start school.

Leaders and managers of the centre use the information they receive from the local authority and the feedback that you provide very effectively to develop the services they offer, assess how well they are doing and to set targets for improvement. These targets have been chosen well to ensure the centre is effective in helping you to improve your lives and those of your children. However, the advisory board is not always involved in monitoring all aspects of the centre's work. We have asked the advisory board to extend their role to include setting targets which are ambitious and to closely check the progress of the centre in meeting these.

Thank you very much for your welcome and for taking the time to talk with inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed meeting you and sharing your experiences. We wish you every success in the future.

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