

Inspection report for Strong Close Nursery School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Bradford
Inspection number	365856
Inspection dates	7-8 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Daniel Grant

Centre governance	Governing Body of Strong Close Nursery School
Centre leader	Mrs Beverly George
Date of previous inspection	First Inspection
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Linked school if applicable	Strong Close Nursery School EY335578
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Strong Close Day Nursery EY355932

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.

The inspectors held meetings with: senior managers from the centre, parents, members of the children's centre sub-committee and the governing body, partners including Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare, health, education and employment. The inspectors visited a range of provision across the centre.

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

Information about the centre

Strong Close Children's Centre opened in 2006; it is one of three designated children's centres in the Keighley area. The centre serves a community which is in one of the 30% most deprived wards in the country. Approximately two thirds of the local families are of White British heritage and one third Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage. Strong Close is a 'children's centre plus', providing the full core offer of services with specialist status for children with additional needs and disabilities. The centre is combined with a nursery school and day-care provision in a modified building and operates as a 'one-stop-shop' model. A multi-agency team, which includes health visitors, family workers, midwives and speech and language therapists, delivers services at the centre.

The centre provides Early Years Foundation Stage provision across the campus under the registrations of Strong Close Nursery School and Strong Close Day Nursery. A maintained nursery school, Strong Close Nursery School, offers provision for children aged three plus. Strong Close Day Nursery provides full daycare for children aged three months to five years and provides wraparound care for up to 16 children accessing nursery school provision. Strong Close Day Nursery is run and managed by the Pre-School Learning Alliance, a voluntary provider, under the overarching

governance of the nursery school. All services operate from within a modified and extended school building, known collectively as Strong Close Nursery School and Children’s Centre. This integrated provision cares for a maximum of 129 children aged from birth to five years at any one session. The nursery and day care were last inspected in 2008. The centre provides additional childcare facilities in a registered crèche for parents attending activities and training at the centre. A headteacher manages all aspects of the provision, supported by a senior leadership team. Governance of the children’s centre is provided by the governing body of the nursery school in conjunction with a children’s centre sub-committee and includes members of the local community and users who attend the children’s centre. This inspection of the children’s centre and nursery school ran concurrently, involving separate teams. There was no inspection of the day nursery provision on this occasion.

The proportion of children attending schools in the area who are known to be entitled to free school meals is above the national average, as is the proportion of children under four years of age who are living in households where no one is working. The proportion of children with disabilities is high for the region.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Strong Close Children’s Centre meets the needs of users well. Users of the centre value the way staff regard the needs of each individual child and their family to be of the highest importance. Users appreciate the inclusive, welcoming, environment that it offers which underpins the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides. All of the centre’s users appreciate the friendly, approachable staff who form trusted working relationships among families. Relationships between staff and all of the people who use the centre are very positive, which promotes strong cohesion in the community. The centre is well led and managed and provides high-quality activities for children and families.

Partnerships are well established and lead to positive outcomes for the centre’s users. The centre provides a wide range of services that are effectively increasing the

knowledge of parents and carers about healthy lifestyles and keeping their children safe. The headteacher has a clear vision of how integrated services delivered from the centre can improve lives. This is shared by the senior leadership team and staff, who work hard to provide very effective services. Morale is high and relationships between staff and users strong.

Outcomes for users are good. Relationships between agencies are highly productive and transfer of information between key partners is prompt and effective. However, partnership arrangements to improve education, training and employment opportunities for adults are underdeveloped. The centre is an inclusive setting and promotes equality well. Provision is expanding to meet the needs of all members of the community, including the most vulnerable, and is impacting positively on their lives. The family support team work very effectively to assess and meet the needs of parents. The centre is working very effectively to keep users engaged and increase the numbers of parents who are taking advantage of the range of opportunities, but there is scope for more to be done to encourage greater numbers of families to use the centre. Assessments are thorough, ensuring outstanding support is provided to vulnerable families and children, as well as others who need it, through the particularly effective family support team. Staff and other adults consistently give the highest priority to safeguarding all children and their families.

Senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths in provision and how the centre could improve but action plans are not detailed enough to fully support leaders in effectively driving improvement. For example, they are well aware that further work is required to reach more families in the area served by the centre, but do not have a thorough enough written plan which describes what should be done to achieve this. Whilst the centre evaluates the quality of provision regularly and uses the information to determine its priorities, staff do not consistently measure success. Processes for monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the centre's work on outcomes are at an early stage but good progress is being made to improve this.

Strong Close Children's Centre has successfully improved outcomes for users since opening. The centre has strong leadership and an active sub-committee that is well supported by the governing body. The local authority is increasingly providing useful quality-assurance advice, which contributes to the centre's good capacity to build on these successes in the future and further improve outcomes for families and children.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase participation by identifying, engaging and encouraging more families to attend the centre.
- Continue to build successful partnerships with statutory, third sector and private organisations to further integrate and improve services in adult education, training and employment.

- Continue to develop arrangements for more accurate recording of the impact of the work of the centre on outcomes for its users.
- Increase the effectiveness of action planning by providing more detail about how targets are to be reached and how progress is to be monitored.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes are improving well across all five areas because the centre provides a good range of activities that are developed particularly well in partnership with other agencies and parents. Strong arrangements have been established with the midwifery team, who hold regular clinics and courses at the centre. Support for expectant mothers is well targeted and very effective. Immunisation and breastfeeding rates have much improved in the past year. Children and parents receive good advice to make healthy choices through a series of interesting and fun activities. The family support team ensures that children and their parents are supported to recognise the importance of balanced food choices. Well organised programmes such as 'cook and eat' and weaning courses help parents to understand the need for, and develop their skills in, preparing healthy food. Participation in many of the health related activities is improving for vulnerable groups such as teenage mothers. Specialist services such as breastfeeding advice, immunisations, dental care and smoking cessation are readily available to all centre users. Evaluations and discussions with parents clearly identify the positive impact of these programmes.

Strong Close Children's Centre is a safe place to be. All services offered in the centre keep users safe. The centre's excellent relationships with families and their children allow staff to identify any safety concerns within families and intervene quickly. Health visitors effectively promote the home safety packs provided by the centre which are very popular and used well by parents. Staff model safe practices well and parents learn to keep their homes and their children safer by watching and listening to staff. Discussions with parents, together with case studies, provide strong evidence that access to parenting programmes with good quality behaviour management support improves relationships, behaviour and home safety for users with their children. Very well trained and experienced family support workers ensure that work undertaken with children who are subject to child protection plans is well coordinated and sensitive to concerns.

Children at the centre access a diverse and inviting setting with stimulating outdoor provision that promotes physical health, allowing them to take risks in a safe, well supervised environment. Children are interested and engaged in their environment and try new activities with confidence. Good attention is given to ensuring all children achieve well and develop good personal and social skills. Parents' and children's enjoyment is evident through the increasing attendance at drop-in and outreach activities. Children's behaviour is good as are relationships between adults and children across all settings. Transitions are particularly well managed.

Opportunities for adults to increase their employability are limited. The family support team offer help with the preparation of job applications but there are too few opportunities for adults to engage in training, further education or benefit from specialist job-seeking advice. Take-up of the opportunities that are currently available is low. However, evidence from case studies and from speaking to several parents shows that economic stability and independence had improved for some parents as a result of the opportunities the centre has provided. A few parents have gained confidence from helping as volunteers in the centre and have gone on to further training and gained employment.

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	2
The extent to which all users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
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?

2

There is a range of very effective assessment processes used to identify the needs of children and their families. Increasingly, and where appropriate, assessment of needs is undertaken at an early stage and is used to ensure progress can be measured. Assessment of individual cases is comprehensive and the Common Assessment Framework is successfully ensuring teams can be gathered quickly to support children and families identified as in need. Midwifery and speech-therapy assessments are used particularly well to identify wider needs.

The centre provides an increasing range of services. Well planned drop-in activities, such as sensory stimulation for children with disabilities, are helping parents to enjoy and understand parenthood. Crèche facilities provide parents with good opportunities to make friends and support each other.

Senior leaders and staff constantly seek ways to identify the needs of specific groups and to tailor activities accordingly. For example, Saturday fun days are well attended by fathers who enjoy sculpting with boxes and playing football. Several of these

fathers continue to attend the centre. The crèche facilities are used effectively to ensure equality of access to all users and particularly those from groups that are more vulnerable. The centre recognises even more could be done to engage the hardest to reach families, and to ensure that all those who want to can access services. Good progress is being made working with partners to gain the information they need to target these families and to identify other venues to ensure that all who want to can access programmes.

Case-study evidence and interviews of parents and partnership organisations show that the quality of individual support is outstanding, and available for as long as needed. For those whose needs are greatest, family support workers provide well targeted, personal support. Careful strategies are in place to ensure parents receive personalised support for their individual circumstances. Such an approach is proving effective with those who may be lone parents or have drug or alcohol dependency. This structured intervention gives parents the confidence to attend the centre where excellent relationships encourage them to take part in memorable and purposeful activities. For some of these parents, and their children, such opportunities can improve their quality of life and ability to cope.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leadership of Strong Close Children's Centre is particularly effective. The headteacher has a clear vision which is shared and understood by the senior leadership team, who are well motivated and enthusiastic. Staff at the centre are passionate about making a difference to children and families in the local area and beyond. Inclusion is given very high priority and is central to all activities and programmes. Users at the centre view staff as positive role models. The centre is determined to make a difference for all groups, particularly those who may be subject to discrimination. The centre promotes equal opportunities well and has many anti-discriminatory practices. Diversity is celebrated well.

Robust procedures are followed by a range of professional agencies to monitor children's welfare and to provide appropriate support where necessary. Very close attention is given to ensuring that staff are suitable to work with children. The centre

has clear protocols implemented by staff and other agencies with regard to reporting any concerns relating to children’s welfare or possible abuse.

The centre’s development plan links to area-wide priorities in order to improve the provision and outcomes for its users. Targets are based on sound analysis of data and are shared by many of the organisations who work in partnership with the centre. Written plans lack sufficient detail about realistic timescales, specific actions and budgetary considerations but the senior leadership are very clear about their priorities. The self-evaluation process is used effectively and correctly identifies the areas requiring improvement. Although the quality of evaluation is good, it is not always well linked to the impact of services on the outcomes for users. The management information system supplied by the local authority is beginning to provide useful information about the reach area. Analysis of this, although at an early stage, is providing a clear starting point for further improvement.

Governance of the centre is good; the chair of governors and the chair of the children’s centre sub-committee play an active role in making decisions. The chair of governors provides excellent support to the headteacher.

In most areas of the centre’s work, partnership working is effective and increasingly good use is made of shared resources to develop services where needs are identified. The headteacher carefully uses the many budgetary strands across the settings to maximise provision for children and their families. She and the senior team deploy staff and resources well across the settings to provide flexible and responsive provision and ensure that the centre is increasingly used well. As a result, the centre provides good 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	2
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	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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the	3

integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been 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	2

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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 Strong Close Children's Centre on 7 to 8 March 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you, your children, members of staff and other professionals who work with the centre.

The children's centre provides a good range of services that are helping children and families in Keighley. Throughout the inspection children, their families and other users were keen to tell us how the centre had helped them. We were particularly impressed by the case studies that showed the difference that the centre was making. We really enjoyed speaking to some of you during the session making pancakes and then meeting children at the crèche.

We found the centre to have many strengths, including the actions taken to support you and your children's safety and well-being and the outstanding quality of care, guidance and support offered by all staff who work with you and your children. The centre is working very closely with many organisations such as schools and health and social care professionals to improve the range of services that are available to you. Using these partnerships it is helping many families and children, particularly those who are most disadvantaged, to have a good start in life. Parents have given us good examples of how the centre has helped them.

The centre offers an increasing range of programmes and activities, including those aimed at improving the health of people in your local communities. It is very good at helping new mums who choose to breastfeed their babies and make decisions about immunisation. We thought that the early notification of pregnancy was good, particularly as it helps the centre let future mums and dads know about all the centre has to offer. It tells them about the help available on breastfeeding, from mums who have successfully breastfed their own children and know the good things and the concerns from experience.

Parents we spoke to describe the centre as providing a safe and welcoming environment; they are confident that their children will be secure and well cared for. The headteacher has very strong procedures to make sure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with your children. Some parents explained just how important the centre is in their family's lives. They told us that staff listen to them and help them to get the right help and support. We found that the centre was excellent in helping families at times in their lives when they most need it. The support is provided quickly and professionals and others work closely together to support both families and children. This includes teenage mums and parents of children with disabilities.

Children make good progress in the nursery where there is a wide range of activities. This helps them to be ready for their move to school. The centre staff make sure they check whether you have enjoyed any courses or sessions in the centre and they respond by making changes based on your comments. Some of you are able to take advantage of courses that are leading to experience and qualifications that will help you if you choose to look for paid work. We think the centre should provide more opportunities for those of you who want support to get a job.

The centre is respected in the local community because of the good leadership of the headteacher and her team. She is well supported by her chair of governors and the chair of the children's centre sub-committee. However, the centre manager knows that to make the centre even better she needs to make sure that she has even better information on the difference that the centre is making in your lives. She and her team want to use this to make detailed plans for more activities and also to ensure that even more people can use the good things that it is providing.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to speak to us, we are very grateful and wish you every success for the future.

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