

Inspection report for Golden Hillock Childrens Centre

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| Local authority | Birmingham |
| Inspection number | 386936 |
| Inspection dates | 16–17 May 2012 |
| Reporting inspector | Usha Devi HMI |

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| Centre leader | Kim Handel |
| Date of previous inspection | Not applicable |
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| Linked early years and childcare, if applicable | EY363996 Golden Start Nursery |
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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 an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, the deputy centre manager, centre staff, members of the senior management team, members of the advisory board, local authority representatives, partner agencies, including representatives from the health service, and families using the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Golden Hillock is a purpose-built phase two centre that was designated in September 2007. It is part of the Small Heath cluster of children's centres. The centre is situated in a residential area, to the east of the centre of Birmingham. It provides the full core offer of services designed to support families in the area, including health services, educational courses, and employment advice. The centre is managed by a centre manager who is accountable to Birmingham City Council. There is also an advisory board that represents families that use the centre and service partners.

Over half of the families in the reach area are of Pakistani heritage. The remainder are from a range of other ethnic groups, including Bangladeshi, African, White British, and Black Caribbean. The centre's reach area is one of high deprivation and unemployment. It serves one of the 20% most deprived areas in the country. An above average proportion of families are dependent on workless or low income benefits. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage provision are well below those expected for their age.

The centre shares a site with City College Birmingham and Golden Start Nursery. The nursery was inspected in March 2012. The inspection report can be found on the Ofsted website www.Ofsted.gov.uk

Golden Hillock is currently clustered with two other children's centre in Small Heath. The local authority is in the process of introducing a locality model of children's

centres. In June 2012, an additional two children’s centres will be joining the Small Heath cluster.

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

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Capacity for sustained improvement

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

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Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Golden Hillock children’s centre is good. ‘The centre is like a second home, my extended family,’ explained one parent. Families appreciate the warm welcome they receive as soon as they enter the centre. Many parents and carers were keen to explain how the centre had made a difference to their lives, particularly when faced with challenging circumstances. One parent, representing the views of many said, ‘My confidence was so low and now it is high because of this centre and the staff.’

Following an analysis of families attending the centre’s services from different areas in their reach, staff took concerted action to promote the work of the centre and to encourage more families to attend the centre or its outreach facilities. This led to a marked increase in participation rates, particularly amongst families from the more deprived parts of the reach area and its target groups such as fathers and lone parents. Consequently, a large number of families are now engaged in the services on offer in the centre, the cluster centre and other sites in the area. These include local schools, the library, and a church.

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement is good. Members of the advisory board, senior leaders, staff, and key partners have a good understanding of the reach area. They have adapted services to better meet the needs of the families, particularly those most in need. As a consequence, families make good progress in their learning and development. The centre integrates different aspects of its work when possible, for instance, in addition to organising specific health and safety related events and projects, it effectively reinforces these aspects during ‘Stay and Play’ sessions and home visits. This ensures that as many families as possible benefit from the support and advice staff and key partners have to offer.

Families using the centre, including those from the target groups, treat each other

with respect. Evaluations and feedback from parents and carers show that sessions, such as 'Every Daddy Matters,' and 'Home Play,' help to develop appropriate behaviour and develop positive relationships amongst families. Nevertheless, parents and carers, including those from the target groups, do not regularly contribute to the governance of the centre.

Feedback from families, evaluations of activities and courses completed by centre staff and partners, questionnaires, case studies and data from different partners confirm that the centre is having a beneficial impact on families, including those from target groups. Senior leaders use this wide ranging information to regularly review the centre's services and identify future needs. However, their evaluation systems are unwieldy and, as a consequence, they do not always take full account of all this information when demonstrating impact. For instance, the centre does not include the information it has on the different target groups that have been supported by centre staff to gain access to employment and training when evidencing the outcome for economic and social well-being. This results in evaluations which, although accurate overall, do not clearly articulate the centre's impact on its target groups in the reach area.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work in partnership with the local authority to strengthen the centre's approach to evaluation and in particular the analysis of data so that centre staff and key partners can more clearly demonstrate their impact on all the different groups in the reach area.
- Provide more opportunities for families to increase their involvement in the governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

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There are good links between the centre and health services. Together, they provide families with effective advice and support. The impact of their work can be seen in high immunisation rates, a decreasing number of babies with low birth weights and in maintaining breastfeeding rates. The centre has plans in place to introduce activities to promote children's physical development in an effort to further reduce the levels of obesity in the area. Antenatal sessions are particularly well attended and valued by women in the reach area. 'Little Chefs' and 'Cook and Eat' sessions enable parents and carers, including those from the centre's target groups, to develop a good understanding of eating healthily. 'I have learnt to choose healthier foods for my family,' reported one parent.

Evaluations indicate that a good proportion of parents and carers from the reach area have been successfully helped to increase their knowledge of safety issues. Following a 'Home Safety' activity, one parent commented, 'I will now change where I put the iron at home once I finish.' Regular 'Team Around the child' meetings

enable staff to closely monitor families whose circumstances make them vulnerable and children who are on child protection plans. Consequently, families in challenging circumstances and those in crisis receive valuable and timely support from centre staff and partner agencies. As one parent said, 'I would be lost without Golden Hillock Children's Centre.'

Disabled children and those who have special educational needs make good progress from their starting points. The proportion of children in the reach area who begin school with the skills and knowledge expected for their age continues to rise. Children with speech difficulties receive a good level of support during 'Communication Group' activities. Parents and carers reported that they value the homework activities which help them to support their child's speech development at home.

Inspectors observed children behaving well and getting on well with other children and adults. Parents and carers report that the centre's courses have helped them to better manage their children's behaviour. Families regularly share their views about individual sessions and courses through evaluations, questionnaires and discussions with staff. Their feedback is used to adapt the content of programmes so that any new learning builds on what they already know, understand and can do.

The centre works well with City College Birmingham and Jobcentre Plus to help adults engage in training and employment. Crèche facilities enable parents and carers to participate in the courses on offer. The centre has successfully helped parents and carers to learn English, achieve accredited qualifications and assisted some in getting back into work. Centre staff work in partnership with a number of agencies, including Family Action, to help the high number of families out of work access the benefits to which they are entitled.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

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| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |

How good is the provision?

2

One parent, while discussing the centre's work commented, 'I used to sit at home alone. The centre has helped me to meet new people, make friends and learn English.' Senior managers and centre staff know their local area well. They work effectively with partners to assess the changing needs of the community, identify families in the greatest need of support and to tailor the centre activities. The quality of outreach provision is good, enabling families from across the reach area to access a range of appropriate support.

Sessions such as 'Little Gems,' and 'Tots Time Out,' enable children to acquire new skills and become confident. Occasionally, during 'Stay and Play' sessions staff miss opportunities to develop and extend children's reading skills. The centre uses photographs and written records in the form of a 'Learning Journey' for each child to record the progress they make. Staff regularly meet with parents and carers to discuss this information. Together, they identify what individual children need to do next so that they can move onto their next stage of learning and development. These meetings help to ensure parents and carers are provided with the advice they need to support their children's learning at home.

'My confidence was low and now it is so high,' 'You see everyone enjoying their job and this makes me feel good,' were just some of the views of parents and carers who spoke with inspectors. Staff provide a good quality of care, guidance and support. They are sensitive to the needs of families in the community and very quickly form effective and trusting relationships with families in times of crisis. Centre staff work effectively with partner agencies to ensure families in challenging circumstances feel well supported. One parent told inspectors, 'The centre has made life easier for me and my family.'

These are the grades for the quality of provision

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| 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 | 2 |
| The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups | 2 |

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The centre manager and deputy centre manager work together well and provide clear direction for staff and partners. They ensure the centre runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Centre staff and partner agencies have worked hard to ensure that the services available for families in the reach area have not been disrupted during the review of children's centres and staffing in the local authority. The effective use of resources within the centre and in the reach area demonstrates that the centre is

providing good value for money.

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. Senior leaders, centre staff and key partners work as a team to ensure their provision meets the needs of the families in the reach area. Members of the advisory board meet regularly to discuss the centre's services. In addition to advisory group meetings, members meet in smaller 'task groups' to review specific aspects of the centre's work. The 'Impact and Evaluation Task Group' is particularly effective at holding the centre to account.

Senior leaders have established a planning group in order to monitor the services provided by the centre. This group regularly asks centre staff and key partners to report on the impact of their work before identifying and prioritising future actions. The centre gathers a wide range of information in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the centre's work. Consequently, self-evaluation is accurate. However, the systems for the collation and presentation of this information are cumbersome. For instance, the centre does not have an efficient means of bringing together data from individual evaluations and agencies to concisely evidence the full impact of its work in the five outcomes and for all the target groups in the reach area.

The inclusion of all families is at the heart of the centre's work. Diversity is celebrated through cultural and religious celebrations. The centre has successfully improved the engagement of families from its target groups, such as lone parents and those experiencing isolation. Activities aimed at Asian women have had a particularly positive impact on their confidence and welfare. Centre staff effectively personalise activities for those with disabilities.

Safeguarding has a high priority. Staff are well trained and demonstrate a good understanding of child protection procedures and the importance of taking action at an early stage. Case studies confirm that staff and key partners work together to ensure that families receive a good level of support when faced with challenging circumstances.

The centre regularly seeks the views of families who attend the centre and has also sought the views of non-users in order to establish how the centre's provision can be enhanced. However, parents and carers are not sufficiently involved in influencing the strategic direction of the centre. This is because of their limited involvement in governance.

These are the grades for leadership and management

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| 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 secure improvement in outcomes | 3 |
| The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target | 2 |

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| groups | |
| 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 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 | 3 |

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

This inspection of the children's centre took account of the findings of the inspection of Golden Start Nursery which was inspected in March 2012.

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 Golden Hillock Children's Centre on 16–17 May 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank you for the warm and friendly welcome you gave to us when we visited your centre. We enjoyed talking with you and hearing about the ways in which the centre is making a difference to you and members of your family. Your views are important and were very helpful to the inspection. Many of you told us that the centre plays an important part in helping you learn new skills and it is also helping you as a parent. We read many of the comments you have written about the centre. It is clear that you value the support provided by staff and that you appreciate the welcome you receive when you attend courses and activities.

The centre is making a positive difference to those of you who take part in all that it has to offer. This is because the centre staff work well with different partners, such as health and social care in order to provide you with a good range of services. Sessions such as 'Little Chefs' and 'Cook and Eat' help you to understand the importance of healthy eating.

Children who attend the centre make good progress. They behave well and the centre successfully helps to prepare them for nursery or school. We could see how

much you were enjoying learning with your children during the 'Little Gems' session. We liked looking through your children's 'Learning Journeys' and hearing how the centre uses these to celebrate your children's achievements.

A number of you are taking part in training and English courses that will help you to gain employment or further qualifications. Many of you said how these were helping you to learn new skills and gain confidence. The centre works well with Family Action to give you financial advice and help you to access the benefits to which are entitled.

Centre staff and key partners work hard to make sure they work with the families that are most in need. Centre leaders collect a range of information to check how well services are meeting the needs of the families in your area. However, their evaluations do not always demonstrate the impact they are having on different families in the area. We have asked the centre to work with the local authority in order to bring together all the information they have so that they can demonstrate the full effect of their work.

The centre staff make sure that you and your children are kept safe. They treat everyone with respect and value your views. Staff listen to you and ask you what you think about the activities the centre offers. You told us that staff make changes to what they do because of what you say. We have asked the centre to encourage more of you to be involved in making important decisions about the centre, by being on the parents' forum or the advisory board.

Thank you once again for your help. We enjoyed visiting your centre and we would like to wish you all the very best for the future.

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