

REPORT TO: SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - 29 JULY 2009

REPORT ON: INTEGRATED INSPECTION OF WHITFIELD COMMUNITY EARLY YEARS CENTRE BY HMIE AND THE CARE COMMISSION

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 380-2009

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this report is to report on the findings of the Integrated Inspection by HMIE on behalf of both HMIE and the Care Commission of Whitfield Community Early Years Centre.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Scrutiny Committee:

- i) notes the contents of this report: and
- ii) instructs the Director of Education to monitor progress towards meeting the areas for improvement contained in this report.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 None

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 Whitfield Community Early Years Centre was inspected in March 2009 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) on behalf of both HMIE and the Care Commission. They published a report on their findings on 29th April 2009. At the time of the inspection the total roll was 56.

4.2 HMIE identified the following key strengths of the centre:

- happy children who are enthusiastic about their learning
- the effective teamwork of staff in creating a very caring, friendly and welcoming ethos for children and parents
- transition arrangements at all stages
- partnership with parents

4.3 Evaluations

4.3.1 The following was identified as a requirement for improvement:

- the service provider must provide staffing levels which are sufficient to meet the needs of children being cared for.

4.3.2 The following were identified as recommendations for improvement:

- improve the quality of learning experiences for all children to provide a greater level of challenge
- provide opportunities for children to develop early skills in literacy and numeracy in appropriate play situations
- make better use of observations and recording of children's learning to plan what children will learn next
- introduce a rigorous and systematic programme of self-evaluation, involving all staff to improve the work of the centre.

4.4 Quality Indicators

4.4.1 HMIE reports use a six-point scale for reporting performance:

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

4.4.2 The following quality indicators from "*The Child at the Centre*" were evaluated:

Quality Indicator	Nursery
Improvement in performance	weak
Children's experience	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs	satisfactory
The curriculum	weak
Improvement through self-evaluation	weak

4.5 The requirement as indicated in 4.3.1 has been overtaken by the authority and the centre. The recommendations as indicated in 4.3.2 are included in the Whitfield Community Early Years Centre's Improvement Plan (2009-2012). These will be reviewed, monitored and evaluated in line with both the centre and authority quality improvement calendar.

4.6 HMIE have indicated that they will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of the publication of the report. As a result of this visit they will report to parents on the extent to which the centre has improved. Following that visit, HMIE may continue to check the improvements the centre makes. They may also carry out a second follow-through inspection within two years of the original report. If they do this then it will result in another report to parents on the extent of improvement that the centre has made.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report has been screened for any implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environment Assessment, Anti-Poverty and Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management.

5.2 There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATION

- 6.1** This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Support Services), Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and Head of Finance.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1** The following Background Papers were relied upon in preparation of this Report:

- Integrated Inspection Report by HMIE on behalf of HMIE and the Care Commission: Whitfield Community Early Years Centre, Dundee City Council, 29th April 2009.

JIM COLLINS
Director of Education

14 July 2009

JC/LW

**Whitfield Community Early Years Centre
Dundee**

29 April 2009

This report tells you about the quality of education at the centre. We describe how children benefit from learning there. We explain how well they are doing and how good the centre is at helping them to learn. Then we look at the ways in which the centre does this. We describe how well the centre works with other groups in the community, including parents¹ and services which support children. We also comment on how well staff and children work together and how they go about improving the centre.

Our report describes the 'ethos' of the centre. By 'ethos' we mean the relationships in the centre, how well children are cared for and treated and how much is expected of them in all aspects of centre life. Finally, we comment on the centre's aims. In particular, we focus on how well the aims help staff to deliver high-quality learning, and the impact of leadership on the centre's success in achieving these aims.

If you would like to learn more about our inspection of the centre, please visit www.hmie.gov.uk. Where applicable, the website contains analyses of questionnaire returns and descriptions of good practice in the centre.

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1. The centre

Whitfield Community Early Years Centre was inspected in March 2009 by HMIE on behalf of both HMIE and the Care Commission as part of the integrated inspection programme. The centre caters for pre-school children aged two to five years. It is registered for 56 children attending at any one session. The total roll was 56 at the time of the inspection.

2. Particular strengths of the centre

- Happy children who are enthusiastic about their learning.
- The effective teamwork of staff in creating a very caring, friendly and welcoming ethos for children and parents.
- Transition arrangements at all stages.
- Partnership with parents.

3. How well do children learn and achieve?

Learning and achievement

In the playroom for two to three year-olds, children interact well with each other and they are learning to share and take turns. They enjoy exploring their environment and are becoming interested in different types of play. A few children are enthusiastic about putting marks on paper and beginning to write. Children aged three to five years are making weak progress in their learning and development. They are becoming confident individuals who are learning to interact with each other. They enjoy learning and are eager to share their experiences with each other and with adults. Children are becoming more independent in daily routines such as snack, selecting resources and when getting ready to play outdoors. Most children show an interest in early writing activities. They are keen to write their names and also their friends' names. A few children are developing their early writing skills in different areas in the nursery. Children listen well to stories and are able to recall descriptions of their favourite characters. Staff did not provide enough activities for children to develop their skills in different situations, for example in reading a notice or snack menu. Most children recognise shapes and can confidently sort by colour and size. Children are developing an understanding and recognition of early number through counting activities and games. They do not have enough opportunity to practise their counting skills and mathematical language in different play situations. Children enjoy being creative in different ways, for example in art and design and role-play. They enjoy opportunities for energetic play indoors and outside. Children are developing their confidence and skills in balancing through different types of pedal toys and climbing equipment. However, children need better experiences in all areas of their learning to ensure that they make appropriate progress.

Curriculum and meeting learning needs

There are important weaknesses in the curriculum. Within the youngest age group, children are able to make choices in their learning but experiences are not well matched to their needs. They would benefit from a variety of natural resources which will encourage them to explore, investigate and be more active in their learning. Staff should review the national guidance within the *Birth to Three* framework to improve learning for these children. Some older children are beginning to plan their learning in discussion with staff. This needs to be developed in order to involve all children. Opportunities to develop early literacy are limited. Staff do not offer appropriate experiences for children to develop their language skills. There is a need to develop all aspects of early reading and writing in play situations and nursery routines such as snack and writing captions for their work. Early number is being developed through a range of activities such as counting games and recording their attendance during 'together time'. Early mathematical and science opportunities are extremely limited. Staff do not offer enough experiences for children to develop their investigative skills and use technology. There needs to be a clearer focus on developing challenging opportunities which will promote children's thinking skills and active learning. Staff plan the curriculum to allow for children to have an awareness of different cultures. It

also takes into account our changing seasons and special celebrations. All aspects of the curriculum should be fully reviewed in line with national guidance.

The approach to meeting children's learning needs is satisfactory. Staff know children well and are sensitive to their care needs. Through playroom observations, they record notes on children's learning. However, this information is not used effectively to plan what children will learn next and, as a result, their individual learning needs are not being fully met. A more rigorous approach to planning and monitoring children's learning experiences is required. Children identified as having additional support needs are identified at an early stage. The centre has recently introduced more appropriate planning to meet their individual needs.

4. How well do staff work with others to support children's learning?

Staff have a good partnership with parents who have opportunities to be involved in their children's learning. They are able to spend time in the playrooms and meet with staff informally and formally. Staff have established good daily communication with parents regarding younger children's daily needs. The centre works well with other agencies such as the sensory impaired service and speech and language therapy to support children who have additional support needs. Some use is made of the local community, for example the library, post office and local school, to support children's learning. This could be further developed and consideration should also be given to more use of the local environment to provide children with a wider range of learning experiences. Transition arrangements at all stages are well established and offer appropriate support to children and their families. Effective links are in place with the local school where children have opportunities for visits prior to their transfer and also support from a member of staff from the centre during their first week in school.

5. Are staff and children actively involved in improving their centre community?

Staff work well together to create a very caring ethos. Despite reflecting on their daily practice, the experiences staff prepare for children can be too easy and do not provide enough challenge for them to progress well enough in their learning. Staff are very eager to be more involved in the process of self-evaluation towards continuous improvement of the centre. The recently appointed teacher is very aware of what improvements are required to support children's learning. Her planning and organisation are beginning to have a clear impact on this and the work of the centre. Children are beginning to have opportunities to decide and plan areas of the playroom which will support their learning, for example voting on the type of role-play areas.

6. Does the centre have high expectations of all children?

Younger children are well supported in their daily routines such as toileting and hand washing. All children are encouraged to develop social skills during snack and lunchtimes. Staff need to develop the use of praise and be more specific about why they are praising children. The centre promotes healthy eating to which children respond well. Use is made of the outdoor area on a daily basis to provide opportunities for energetic play and experiencing the natural world.

7. Does the centre have a clear sense of direction?

The head of centre requires a more focused, rigorous and systematic approach to evaluating the work of the centre. She should involve all staff in the process of self-evaluation. She, along with the depute, should monitor playroom practice on a regular basis. There is the need to focus on identified areas for improvement and how they are impacting on children's learning.

8. What happens next?

We will carry out a follow-through inspection visit within one year of publication of this report and will report to parents on the extent to which the centre has improved. Following that visit, we may continue to check the improvements the centre has made. We may also carry out a second follow-through inspection within two years of the original inspection report. If a second follow-through inspection visit is necessary then it will result in another report to parents on the extent of improvement that the centre has made.

We have agreed the following areas for improvement with the centre and education authority.

- Improve the quality of learning experiences for all children to provide a greater level of challenge.
- Provide opportunities for children to develop early skills in literacy and numeracy in appropriate play situations.
- Make better use of observations and recording of children's learning to plan what children will learn next.
- Introduce a rigorous and systematic programme of self-evaluation, involving all staff to improve the work of the centre.

At the last Care Commission inspection of the centre there was one recommendation and one requirement. These have since been addressed.

Requirements

- The service provider must provide staffing levels which are sufficient to meet the needs of the children being cared for.
This is in order to comply with The Regulation of Care (Requirements as to Care Services) (Scotland) Regulations 2002, Scottish Statutory Instrument 2002 Number 114 Regulation 13(a)
- a requirement that a provider shall have at all times suitably qualified and competent persons working in the care service in such numbers as are appropriate for the health and welfare of service users.

Quality indicators help centres, education authorities and inspectors to judge what is good and what needs to be improved in the work of a centre. You can find these quality indicators in the HMIE publication *The Child at the Centre*. Following the inspection of each centre, the Scottish Government gathers evaluations of three important quality indicators to keep track of how well all Scottish centres are doing.

Here are the evaluations for Whitfield Community Early Years Centre.

Improvements in performance	weak
Children's experiences	satisfactory
Meeting learning needs	satisfactory

We also evaluated the following aspects of the work of the centre.

The curriculum	weak
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Improvement through self-evaluation	weak
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Managing Inspector: Gordon Buchanan
29 April 2009

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Our complaints procedure is available from our website www.hmie.gov.uk or alternatively you can write to our Complaints Manager, at the address above or by telephoning 01506 600259 or the Complaints Coordinator, Headquarters, Care Commission, Compass House, Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY.

If you are not satisfied with the action we have taken at the end of our complaints procedure, you can raise your complaint with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO is fully independent and has powers to investigate complaints about Government departments and agencies. You should write to SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh EH3 0BR. You can also telephone 0800 377 7330, fax 0800 377 7331 or e-mail: ask@spsa.org.uk. More information about the Ombudsman's office can be obtained from the website at www.spsa.org.uk.

This report uses the following word scale to make clear judgements made by inspectors.

excellent	outstanding, sector leading
very good	major strengths
good	important strengths with some areas for improvement
satisfactory	strengths just outweigh weaknesses
weak	important weaknesses
unsatisfactory	major weaknesses

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Footnote

1. Throughout this report, the term 'parents' should be taken to include foster carers and carers who are relatives or friends.
