

Inspection report for Bryn Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Wigan
Inspection number	383397
Inspection dates	18–19 January 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	106438 Bryn St Peter's Church of England Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY380302 Happy Hours Day Nursery and Kool Kidz after school club

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.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with centre leaders, staff, a wide range of partners, a representative of the local authority linked to the centre and users. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Bryn Sure Start Children's Centre, which opened in October 2008, is a purpose built Phase 2 centre, situated in the Ashton Bryn township of Wigan. The centre is based within the Bryn community building which is on the site of St Peter's CE Primary School. Services are delivered from the children's centre and nearby venues. The building accommodates the children's centre and Happy Hours Day Nursery which provides full childcare facilities. Kool Kidz After School Club operates from within the school.

Since 2010, the centre has been managed by a collaborative leadership committee which includes members of the governing bodies of the schools in the centre's reach area, the headteacher of St Peter's CE Primary School, the centre coordinator and representatives from the local authority and partnership services. The school headteacher is also head of the children's centre. Day-to-day management of the centre is delegated to the children's centre coordinator. Following a period of staffing reorganisation two additional full time members of staff were appointed in 2010.

The centre offers a range of locally commissioned services on site and at its associated venues, together with outreach support. The centre signposts users to other services provided within the community and commissioned by the local authority.

National neighbourhood statistics and local surveys show considerable social and economic diversity with areas of relative affluence and pockets of deprivation. There is a mix of newer private and older terraced housing and council housing estates. There are above national average levels of unemployment, with levels of adult literacy and numeracy being close to national averages. The majority of children entering Early Years Foundation Stage have skills and levels of development broadly in line with those expected for their age, although there are wide variations within the reach area. The vast majority of families within the area are of White British heritage.

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

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of Bryn Sure Start Children's Centre is satisfactory. The centre provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for those accessing its services and is becoming increasingly well established in the community. Those who use the centre appreciate the good care, guidance and support they receive. They say how important the centre has become in building confidence, providing support and sharing life experiences with others. 'I was in a lonely place but now I belong to the community', reflects the feelings of many parents.

Good partnership working with other agencies, and effective cooperation between the link worker, health visitors and midwives have ensured an increasing number of families, including those from the areas of highest deprivation and target groups, are being referred to the centre, although the overall percentage registered remains average. Families, particularly the most vulnerable, receive cohesive packages of care and are well supported in accessing multi-agency services and engaging in centre activities. The centre successfully signposts teenage mothers to relevant services and provides a support network for parents of children with special needs. The centre is successful in its work to remove barriers to access for all groups and in its promotion and celebration of equality and diversity. The centre has been particularly successful in identifying the needs of male carers and engaging and supporting them. The good safeguarding procedures, well-established systems and links with other services ensure that concerns are identified and prompt action is taken to support families in need.

Families who use the centre enjoy the activities and services which are commissioned by the centre and many are well attended. Many parents indicate that they now have a greater awareness and understanding of how to keep their families safe and healthy. They have achieved greater self-confidence which in many cases enables them to enhance their skills as parents and broaden their understanding of how children learn and develop. Children's achievements, as demonstrated by their results in the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile, are improving overall and are now broadly in line with national averages. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest has narrowed to below that for the local authority as a whole. Local schools report that the work of the centre has had a positive impact on preparing children for transition to school. The centre recognises the need to develop more consistent systems for monitoring children's progress across services. Although feedback and evaluations indicate improvements in outcomes for individual families, systems for obtaining and analysing data to measure the overall impact of the centre's work are at an early stage of development.

Children and others using the centre develop positive relationships. Families using the centre are listened to and feel that their views are taken into account when activities are planned. However, the parents' forum has yet to play a full role in contributing to strategic decision making.

Effective leadership and management by the recently established collaborative leadership committee, head of centre and centre coordinator have helped the centre improve and develop the services it provides for families. The local authority has provided the centre with some information and guidance to enable it to set priorities, but action planning currently lacks rigour and does not incorporate specific measurable targets for improvement. The positive impact of the centre's work on some outcomes for children and families since the centre opened, together with satisfactory overall leadership and management of the centre, indicate that the centre has satisfactory capacity to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve self-evaluation and action planning by:
 - obtaining and using data more effectively to set targets that are specific and measurable
 - strengthening the role of the collaborative leadership committee to monitor the impact of the centre's work more systematically
 - introducing greater rigour into parent evaluations and increasing their contribution to decision making.
- Strengthen strategies to increase engagement and improve outcomes for more children and families including target groups.
- Improve outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by developing consistent tracking systems to monitor children's progress across the centre's services.

How good are outcomes for families?

The centre promotes healthy living through a range of activities. A weekly lunch club which provides opportunities to learn about healthy eating and to share new recipes has a positive impact on the choices made at home. Activities such as Physi Bodies develop an increased awareness among users of the benefits of physical exercise. Health services provide a consistent approach to health promotion at the well-attended healthy child clinic and premature baby group. The centre effectively raises the profile of both physical and emotional well being through its displays of information and signposting to services such as counselling, smoking cessation services, breastfeeding groups and health trainers.

Parents appreciate the safe secure environment provided for their families at the centre and associated venues. Their understanding of how to manage their children's behaviour and keep their children safe is increased through the positive role models provided by staff. Some sessions specifically target aspects of safety, such as the correct use of car seats. The link worker assesses and advises on safety needs in the homes of families receiving targeted support. The centre provides timely support for referred families. Multi-agency working is effective in safeguarding children and supporting those on child protection plans. Parents access information about staying safe at regular police surgeries, and through signposting to parenting courses.

Children are happy and enjoy being at the centre. Parents comment positively on the opportunities provided for activities that they would be unable to provide at home, such as messy play and sensory experiences. The Dolly Parton Imagination Library gives families access to high quality books and successfully motivates children to enjoy them on a regular basis. Activities commissioned by the centre, together with networking between schools, nurseries and other childcare providers have contributed to improvements in children's readiness for school and outcomes in the Early Years Foundation Stage. There are, however, few opportunities for adults to undertake training and there is little evidence of the centre's impact on developing skills and gaining qualifications.

Adults and children using the centre demonstrate positive attitudes and an atmosphere of respect prevails. Parents appreciate the activities which develop children's personal and social skills such as sharing and taking turns. Some activities, such as Tiddlers and Toddlers, are organised by parents. The views of parents are taken into account when planning services, although evaluations lack the necessary focus to contribute fully to shaping future services. Opportunities to be involved in volunteering and the governance of the centre are in the early stages of development.

Children make good progress in developing skills for the future, for example developing independence. Good support is provided for parents in accessing childcare. Regular links with Jobcentre Plus and displays in the centre ensure users receive appropriate guidance

and information regarding benefits and employment opportunities. There is limited evidence about the progression of parents from education or training into employment.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all 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	3
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?

3

The centre staff have a good knowledge of local families and the community and strive to ensure that those with the greatest needs receive personalised support. The link worker is particularly successful in the assessment of families' needs and in working alongside other agencies to target services effectively. Joint home visits with health visitors are instrumental in providing integrated packages of care for vulnerable families. Data show that there have been considerable increases in registration, attendance and participation during the past year. Specific activities and services are provided to target hard to reach groups and those in areas where there are highest levels of non-engagement.

A range of activities commissioned by the centre are in place. Some of these, such as Jo Jingles and Baby Sensory, are particularly well attended. Feedback from users shows that sessions are thoroughly enjoyed. Parents appreciate opportunities for their children to interact socially. However, planning and evaluation of some of these activities lack the necessary rigour to ensure that they impact positively on outcomes.

The centre staff are sensitive to, and supportive of, individual needs. Many parents commented on the warm welcome that they receive from staff in reception who will 'always go the extra mile' to support them. All staff are diligent in signposting users to appropriate services, such as housing and counselling. Those using the centre can obtain a wide and varied range of information and advice on many aspects of their lives, either through the information point, leaflets they can read themselves or by speaking to someone at the centre. Case studies and personal testimony demonstrate the wealth of emotional and practical advice and support which is provided in times of crisis. Users say that the centre reduces isolation and gives them self-belief.

Cluster working contributes to good provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage within the on-site and other local childcare facilities. There are some opportunities for parents to improve their personal and educational development, although these are limited by local availability. Systems for setting personal goals, tracking progress and celebrating achievement for all users are not yet fully developed.

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	3
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?

3

The centre coordinator demonstrates drive and commitment to improving the centre's role in the community. She is supported in this by the local authority and head of centre. Over a short period of time there has been a significant increase in the number of users engaging with services and in the range of services provided. All centre staff support the drive for improvement through their innovative and flexible approach.

The recently formed collaborative leadership committee brings a range of expertise to the governance of the centre. It has still to become systematically involved in evaluation and provide greater challenge to demonstrate the impact of the centre's work. There are clear management structures and well-embedded systems for professional supervision, performance management and training. Working groups and the project network are effective in sharing information, monitoring provision and making appropriate decisions. Some aspects of local data provided by the local authority have helped the centre to prioritise its work effectively, for example, to reduce childhood obesity, but a full range of up-to-date information is not yet available to the centre to enable it to monitor the impact of its work and set precise targets for improvement.

Resources are managed effectively and evaluations show that users are satisfied with services and activities provided by the centre and with the quality of the environment within the centre. Consequently, the centre provides satisfactory value for money. Plans are in place to develop staff skills further to ensure sustainability of services. Well-developed links with the neighbouring children's centre and local schools ensure that information is shared and activities are not duplicated.

The inclusion of all children and families, regardless of background, is central to the centre's vision. There is no discrimination and users comment on how they never feel judged. 'Everyone accepts you and makes you feel welcome', was a sentiment expressed by many parents. The centre staff work hard to ensure that there are no barriers to access, through

their support and provision for parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for fathers and male carers, and by providing activities and services in different venues and at different times. Targeted support gives parents of all backgrounds the confidence to access the activities on offer.

Policies and procedures for safeguarding are good and are regularly reviewed, to ensure the safety, security and well being of all those who use the centre and its services. All required recruitment and vetting checks are carried out. Staff are trained to appropriate levels and are alert to any signs of safeguarding concerns. Multi-agency working and the use of the Common Assessment Framework are well established and ensure that a range of professionals work together well to safeguard and protect children and families.

A good range of partnerships are in place, including with health, Jobcentre Plus, community police, schools and childcare providers which enable the sharing of information at individual, family and community level. The centre is proactive in developing relevant partnerships, for example with midwives and health visitors, in order to assess and meet the needs of families in all parts of the reach area more fully.

The centre is aware of the need to further engage members across the community. A range of appropriate strategies is in place to publicise the centre's work, including community events. Outreach work has been particularly successful in engaging with those families most in need. Current users are encouraged to develop their confidence and skills to promote and contribute to the provision of activities.

These are the grades for leadership and management:

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	3
The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secures 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 groups	3
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

When making their judgements, the inspectors took into account the findings from the coordinated inspection of St Peter's CE Primary School and the previous report for Happy Hours Day Nursery and Kool Kidz After School Club, inspected in 2009.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Bryn Sure Start Children's Centre on 18 and 19 January 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. Some features, such as the care, guidance and support offered to families, are good.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and for contributing to the inspection by sharing your experiences and views of your children's centre. It was good to hear how much you appreciate all that the centre staff do to help you and how the centre has made a difference to your lives.

Many of you told us how welcoming, friendly and helpful the staff are, how no one is ever turned away and how no one ever feels judged. The staff always treat you as individuals. We could see that you enjoy the many opportunities to have fun with your children, and do things together that you would not do at home, such as when you attend Baby Sensory and Tiddler and Toddler. You enjoy seeing your children making friends with each other, learning to share and take turns and becoming more independent. The centre also gives you the opportunity to share ideas and experiences with each other, especially those of you who are male carers or who have children with special needs. We know that some of you have made really good friends through coming to the centre.

The centre works well with many partners to provide health advice, information about benefits and employment, and support for you and your families when you are going through difficult times. We found that the staff are always keen to ensure that you and your children are safe and well looked after. They listen to your views and you know that your opinions matter. It is clear that the staff work very hard and want the very best for you and your families.

We know that the centre staff are committed to making the centre even better. They know that they need to make sure more people join the centre so that they can benefit too. We think that they could help your children learn even better by tracking their progress at different sessions and sharing this with you. We have suggested that they use data more

effectively to set targets and measure improvements in the services provided and the impact of this work upon families. We have also suggested that the collaborative leadership committee takes a greater part in decision making and that parents are also more involved in this.

Thank you again for taking time to talk with us and we wish you and your families every success in the future.

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