

Inspection report for Birdholme Children's Centre

Local authority	Derbyshire
Inspection number	367751
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Spire Infant and Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY402807 Families First Childcare Co-op

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 the centre coordinator, the team leader, centre workers, several partners and managers, representatives from the local authority, parents and the advisory group.

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

Information about the centre

Birdholme Children's Centre is a phase one centre, which was designated in 2006. It operates from purpose-built premises located on the site of Spire Infant and Nursery School and the Hunloke Adult Education Centre. The centre offers childcare through private day care and crèche facilities. The centre offers a range of universal and targeted services with the support of key partners and commissioned services on site and at venues within the community.

Most families are of White British heritage. The area is mainly residential. Most of the housing is provided by the local authority. However, a small minority of families live in private rented and privately owned housing. The centre's reach area covers one of the most deprived wards in Chesterfield, although the outer edge of the area also contains some of the most affluent wards. Recent figures show that the population of children aged nought to five years of age is 943, with just over half living in the 30% most deprived areas in the country. Unemployment is above average and 29% of families are living in households dependent on workless benefits.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through various settings and groups. Children generally enter childcare and early education with skills below expected levels for their age. On-site day care is provided for up to 45 children under eight

years of age, and of these not more than 12 may be under two years of age. Separate arrangements are in place to inspect this provision and reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The centre is managed by a coordinator who also has responsibility for another children's centre. The work of the centre is monitored by the local authority and an advisory board which consists of a range of professionals and partners. The centre is open from 8am until 6pm, Monday to Friday, 52 weeks of the year. The centre also opens at weekends to meet families' needs.

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

Birdholme Children's Centre is a good centre which is well known in the local community. Many parents described services simply as 'fantastic' or 'brilliant'. The leadership, management and provision of the centre are all good. Consequently, the outcomes for children and their families are good.

This is an inclusive centre, and attention to equality and diversity is good. Parents all say they feel safe and very welcome in the friendly environment of the centre. Young parents are particularly well supported. The centre runs several effective programmes which successfully help develop parenting skills. Families thoroughly appreciate the good range of services provided. As a result, user satisfaction is high.

The promotion of safeguarding and healthy lifestyles is high priority. The centre workers, along with health colleagues, are always looking for ways to improve antenatal work further. They acknowledge partnership with health is paramount to the continued success of their early intervention work. The percentage of mothers initiating breastfeeding has increased. The centre acknowledges more work is still to be done to increase the number of mothers that continue to sustain breastfeeding at six to eight weeks.

Outreach work is a real strength of the centre. The centre works extremely well with all of its well-established partners. Work with the linked childcare provider and the

linked school is particularly effective. Successful multi-agency work provides a robust approach to ensuring the individual needs of families are well met, particularly for those families whose circumstances make them vulnerable. A large majority of targeted families are engaged with the work of the centre. A typical comment from a parent was, 'If it was not for this centre, I would not be where I am now.'

Most families in the community are registered with the centre and further work is ongoing to increase the number of families engaging with the centre's services. The centre actively encourages parents to share their ideas in order to shape services to meet their needs. The parents' forum and several successful informal methods keep the advisory board well informed of parents' views. However, no parents are involved in the more formal environment of the advisory board. As a consequence, they do not have a strategic oversight of the centre's work. The centre coordinator is keen to ensure the advisory board reflects the views of local families.

The centre coordinator has led and managed the development of the centre since it was established. Well-considered development plans have promoted continuous improvement and have focused appropriately on the areas for further improvement and on any gaps in the provision. The centre's business plan prioritises required actions with clear timescales and success targets which can easily be measured. As a result, the centre has good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve health outcomes further by continuing to work with partners to increase the number of women sustaining breastfeeding.
- Encourage parents to be engaged in the governance of the centre as members of the advisory board.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Several parents told inspectors about the difference attending 'Baby Massage' has made to helping them bond with their babies. Many expressed appreciation of the centre workers' genuine interest in them which makes them feel valued as individuals. A grandparent stated, 'The centre is absolutely marvellous and it was a lifeline for me.' A parent said the centre workers feel like a family, another said she now understood the importance of the saying, 'a happy parent, happy child'. Good support is in place to promote breastfeeding. As a result, although data suggest this is still below the national average, the figures have increased from 47% to 70%. However, the centre is not as successful at encouraging mothers to sustain breastfeeding. Parents are helping to protect their children from childhood illnesses as the take-up of immunisation programmes is high.

Initiatives such as the 'Healthy Eating and Nutrition in the Really Young' (HENRY) courses promote a healthier diet and help parents to identify the salt, fat and sugar content of everyday foods. Parents were eager to point out the sugar content of popular children's drinks which they used to buy for their children and now substitute with water or milk. Consequently, the number of children who are obese when starting Reception is below the national average and there are few dental health issues.

Families using the centre develop a good understanding of how to keep their children and themselves safe through the good practice which workers at the centre model daily and the range of safety advice which is given out routinely to minimise risks to children. First-aid training has successfully informed parents about what to do in the event of an emergency.

The 'team around the family' approach and the Common Assessment Framework are used particularly well to identify needs and support those families who are experiencing a range of difficulties, such as domestic violence, substance misuse and mental health issues. Good liaison with social care and other partner agencies ensures the life chances and well-being of those on the child protection register are significantly improved through regular consultation and effective support.

An extremely child-centred approach makes sure children's views are listened to and activities support their individual interests and positive contributions. Children identified as needing additional support make good progress. As a result, children's achievements are good given their low starting points. Early years' data now generally show a slowly narrowing achievement gap between the lowest 20% of children and others in the area.

Parents who have faced extremely difficult circumstances are helped to reach their potential through the steady nurturing and development of their skills and knowledge. Parents explore values which help them to understand how to manage their children's behaviour. They learn about the importance of play and praise to help with their children's development and sense of well-being. A parent who had attended the 'Parent Power' programme stated, 'This is an excellent service, I would recommend it.' Many described the impact of changes greatly improving their relationships and confidence. Parents' views and ideas are regularly sought and passed on to the advisory group from the parents' forum to ensure the parents' voice is heard and these contribute to the governance of the centre and the shaping of services.

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	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

The centre is very accessible, ideally situated between the school and childcare provision and is in very close proximity to where adult education is delivered. The site is in the heart of the community where there is a high percentage of families whom the centre targets. Families have access to a well-equipped sensory room. The centre hosts a variety of meetings which include supervised contact meetings with children. There is a good take-up of a well-established scheme offering low-cost locally grown fruit and vegetables. Members of the community regularly drop in to the centre for information where the workers give them good care, advice and support.

The centre offers a good range of popular services such as the 'Baby Weigh and Play' drop-ins, 'PEEPs' and 'Stay and Play'. The workers at the centre recognise the important role fathers play in their children's development and they are made to feel welcome at all groups. Specific groups for fathers such as 'Kick Start' and 'Men Behaving Dadly' run periodically to meet their specific needs.

The 'Young Parents' group is popular and they have produced a digital video disc which celebrates how efficiently their needs are met. Families' regular attendance at this group is rewarded by worthwhile outings to places of interest. Achievements are recognised through keeping photographs and samples of craft activities.

Children have access to high-quality childcare and education. Parents now have access to the free entitlement places for two-year-olds. Challenge for children is good and they learn how to keep themselves safe by using real tools safely. Opportunities for children to explore and learn outdoors are good as the centre has recently developed and extended its outdoor play areas. Children have easy access to the school allotment and greenhouse on site where they help to grow organic produce. Members of the community regularly use the centre's training kitchen with children and young people. In addition, families have easy access to the inviting community garden on site where themes like 'We are going on a Bear Hunt' can be enjoyed.

Some services are delivered at schools in the community to meet the needs of users. All the centre's groups promote children's readiness for school, but specific sessions, such as 'Ready for School', now further aid children's transition to their next stage of learning. Initiatives such as 'Every Child a Talker' have prompted new groups,

although it is too early to judge the impact of this work.

There is a long history of worklessness in many families. The centre is working hard to change cultural acceptance of living off benefits and works closely with the adult education team to offer a good range of activities and courses that are helping families build aspirations and gain the qualifications that they need to enable them to enter the workforce. Courses such as 'Using Craft Activities for Young Children' and 'Story Sacks' meet groups of parents' needs well and they are successful in meeting specific individual needs. Despite some individuals having very complex circumstances, they have eagerly gained skills for life. Some have gained vocational or non-vocational achievements and a few have become learning champions. Several parents have shown their appreciation of the work of the centre by offering their services as volunteers, or acting as befrienders and mentors. The Citizens Advice Bureau and Jobcentre Plus are regularly present in the centre. They play an instrumental role in offering advice and financial support and signposting lone parents to employment opportunities.

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	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 coordinator knows the strengths of the centre and what needs to be done to secure further improvement. Self-evaluation is largely accurate. The centre's work is challenged and held to account by the established advisory board. The advisory board members are enthusiastic and passionate about the work of the centre and its continual development. The centre workers were described as 'sensitive and discrete' in their work. Procedures to recruit volunteers are good and they contribute well to the work of the centre. At a more strategic level, despite changes to the county-wide structures and new partnership locality plans, there is a clear sense of direction. Consequently, governance of the centre is good.

Clear line-management responsibilities are in place for supervision of centre workers. Caseloads are managed well to ensure outreach is well focused. Centre workers conduct purposeful evaluations of their work. All partners understand their roles in developing integrated provision to meet users' needs, particularly the centre's target group of children in workless households. The business services based at the centre constantly strive to promote financial efficiencies. The electronic database has developed over time and now enables the centre coordinator to scrutinise relevant data for the community which are used effectively to identify and monitor trends and

the impact of the centre's work. The centre works closely with other children's centres in the area to prevent duplication of services and promote sustainability. Additional funds are occasionally sourced to support specific events. As a consequence, the centre offers good value for money.

Good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of the centre's work. The premises are safe and security is regularly reviewed. Training for workers at the centre is up to date and relevant to their roles. Risk assessments and fire-safety drills are conducted on a regular basis. All partner agencies understand the wider safeguarding agenda. Safeguarding arrangements comply with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board requirements. Safe recruitment procedures are implemented rigorously to ensure all who work with children are suitable to do so. The Common Assessment Framework is used well to target specific support for families. Case studies evidence sensitive multi-agency work.

Equality and diversity are fully celebrated in the centre. Parents feel that they are respected at the centre which is free of any form of discrimination. Those few who speak English as an additional language receive bespoke services tailored to meet their individual needs. As a result, they are extremely positive about the support they receive and how welcome they are made to feel on arrival at the centre.

The centre has an established parents' forum which provides further opportunities for parents to become empowered to make a meaningful contribution to decision making and to influence the range of activities on offer. The centre coordinator attends regular meetings in the community and community cohesion is promoted well through regular engagement with the community through outreach work.

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 secure 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	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

<p>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</p>	<p>2</p>
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

Families First Childcare Co-op childcare was inspected in 2010 when it was judged outstanding. This inspection has contributed to the children's centre report and judgements. The full report can be found on the Ofsted website.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Birdholme Children's Centre on 1 and 2 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We were pleased to hear how safe and welcome you feel at the centre. You were passionate about how much you feel valued by the centre workers who run well-organised services for you which you enjoy. You told us how much you trust the workers at the centre and that you particularly enjoy the opportunity to develop social networks. One parent said workers at the centre were like a 'fairy godmother'.

The multi-agency partners and the team of workers commissioned by the centre all work very well together and use their professional experience, knowledge and resources to meet your specific needs. They assess any difficult situations successfully and they know what support to provide for you in a crisis.

We know that the number of mothers choosing to breastfeed has increased and that many of you have been successfully supported to do this. We have asked the centre to work closely with its health partners to make sure more of you are given sufficient support to enable you to carry on breastfeeding once you have started.

We know many of you look forward to the 'Stay and Play' sessions and attend the different 'PEEPs' groups and the 'Baby Weigh and Play'. You enjoy supporting your children's development, extending their learning at home and joining in with singing and craft activities at the centre. Many of you were positive regarding adopting more healthy lifestyles following attendance at healthy eating courses. Some of you said you now understand how you can substitute salt with herbs and you are confident now to try out new recipes with your families.

We understand many of you enjoy the 'Baby Massage'. You were extremely positive about the benefits of using massage to improve bonding with your babies and some

of you even said this helped your children's digestion. You told us parenting programmes such as 'Kick Start' and 'Parent Power' have developed your self-esteem and confidence and enhanced your parenting skills. You told us you have found the use of star charts to promote positive behaviour extremely helpful in managing your children's understanding of daily routines, especially at night time.

You understand the importance of helping your children develop good speaking and listening skills. The majority of you have joined the library service because you understand how important it is to share books with children. Many said you look forward to the holiday play schemes which your children are eager to attend. Those of you who have attended a first-aid course described how you feel much more confident now to deal with emergencies like choking and you said you were less likely to panic.

We know some of you act as volunteers and are strengthening the work of the centre as well as increasing your own skills. We know some of you attend the established parents' forum to share your ideas and views. We have asked the centre to increase opportunities for you to be more involved in the decision making and monitoring of the centre's progress. We hope that some of you will want to support the governance of the centre by joining the advisory board.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak to us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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