

# Inspection report for Billingham Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Lincolnshire
<b>Inspection number</b>	383367
<b>Inspection dates</b>	1–2 February 2012
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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Billinghay Church of England Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Not applicable

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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 partner 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 for this inspection is available on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by one additional inspector and one early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, a representative from the local authority, members of the advisory board, and a range of providers, centre users and centre staff. Inspectors observed the centre's work including provision at the centre and other sites. They looked at relevant documentation including the centre's operational plans, self-evaluations, key policies and safeguarding procedures.

## Information about the centre

Billinghay Children's Centre was designated as a phase two centre in 2008. The centre is situated in rural Lincolnshire; 429 children in the area are aged between nought and five years old. The centre serves communities that live in one of the 50% most deprived areas in the country. The centre offers provision in partnership with other centres to maximise services for families in the wider area; families from further afield attend activities at the centre regularly. The area, while not densely populated, is socially very mixed. Almost all families are of White British heritage. An average proportion of families claim benefits as the incidence of worklessness is broadly average. A high proportion of children from the reach area enter school with skills, knowledge and abilities that are at the levels typical for their age. Within the area the centre serves, levels of extreme poverty, unemployment, poor health and low levels of literacy and numeracy are lower than found nationally.

The centre offers a range of health, social care and family support services; crèche facilities are arranged to support activities. In partnership with other providers, the centre offers a range of activities during the school holidays. Childcare provision is available through private providers and childminders in the area. The centre is governed by the local authority.

## 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

The centre's overall effectiveness is good. Despite being located in a village with no public transport, provision and outcomes for families are good. The centre manager, and staff work effectively and serve the community well. Partnerships with other providers are good. The centre has established itself as a valuable resource for the community. Parents and carers said that they and their children are safe at the centre and that the support they receive helps them to stay safe. Safeguarding procedures are good. Staff provide outstanding support to families in times of crisis and share any concerns with relevant agencies promptly. Families benefit from the close working relationship between providers in that all referrals are followed up quickly; this has raised confidence in the community that help is always at hand.

Through good partnership with health providers, including onsite clinics, the centre promotes healthy living effectively. As a result, families increase their understanding of how to stay healthy. Breastfeeding, weaning and the 'Fit for Life' courses promote good eating habits and fitness regimes, particularly benefiting young children and their families. In partnership with other providers, the centre offers a good range of services and is particularly effective in encouraging children, young parents and disability groups to participate. Response to the holiday provision was especially encouraging, with nearly half of those attending coming from the key target groups. The centre's efforts to involve fathers are less successful. Engagement of families is good; an increasing number from key target groups participate because, where necessary, the centre provides transport to activities or offers home visits. Families enjoy the many high-quality sessions provided and benefit from support, for example regarding housing, benefits and counselling.

Children's achievements have improved significantly over the last three years; overall achievement is now above levels typical for children at the age of five. The gap between the lowest achieving 20% and the rest has narrowed at a faster rate than seen nationally. Schools confirm that those children who attend activities at the centre achieve well. Adults improve their parenting skills through the good support and activities at the centre. Adult education partners provide a range of courses that equip adults to seek employment. The numbers participating increased last year.

Case studies show that some adults gain qualifications and progress to employment or further education and training. However, the centre does not have sufficient information on adults' progress to plan and monitor provision more accurately, particularly to ensure that more adults from key target groups are successful.

The centre has a clear focus on supporting all children and families and meets the duties that apply to it for equality and diversity well. Support for individual families is of high quality; families who use the centre feel safe and valued. Families where children or their carers are disabled or have special educational needs and lone parents are supported well. While evaluation activities are systematic, the centre does not always have the data it needs to assess the full impact of its work, particularly on the families who do not access services and to develop more precise, measurable and ambitious targets. Leaders and staff are committed to improving provision and reaching more of the target families. Staffing deployment across the wider area is stretched to sustain every activity. To address this, the volunteer programme to promote self-help is having a positive impact. The centre encourages families using the centre to voice their views about the centre regularly. However, parents are not involved enough in decision making; they are under-represented on the advisory board and there is no formal parents' forum. Nevertheless, an improving trend in performance outcomes for families, together with good quality of provision and leadership and management, demonstrate a good capacity for sustained improvement.

## What does the centre need to do to improve further?

### Recommendations for further improvement

- Track the progress and achievements of adults and ensure that adults from key target groups have the support they need to improve their economic well-being.
- Improve the analysis of data to assess the impact of the centre's work and set precise and more ambitious improvement targets for those groups who do not currently participate fully.
- Involve parents more in making decisions about the centre's work and in developing self-help groups to sustain the activities that the community wants.

## How good are outcomes for families?

2
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The centre promotes healthy living well. Keep fit and cookery courses are very popular and often full. Attendances at health clinics are high. Breastfeeding rates are average and improving due to the added impact of the centre's breastfeeding mentors. Data indicate that the number of children who are obese by the age of five years old, at 4%, is below the average. While overall smoking rates are average, the number of mothers smoking during pregnancy rose slightly last year. To address this, the centre has a dedicated health trainer to promote smoking cessation. Families, particularly those in the key target groups, benefit immensely from the advice and promotion of safety through the various courses, including first aid, and individual home safety checks. As a result, they have a better understanding of how to keep

their families safe. All referrals are followed up promptly; swift action is taken, particularly where there are child protection concerns by ensuring that all services implement the required common assessment procedures fully. As one parent said, 'I couldn't have coped when things got really bad – centre staff helped me through a very black period in my life and made sure my family was safe and stayed together. It's the only place I feel really valued.'

Children who use the centre achieve well when they enter school. In 2011, around 58% of the adjacent primary school's Reception Year children were from target families supported by the centre. Results at the end of their Early Years Foundation Stage, at 88% of children achieving six points or more on the Foundation Stage Profile, rose last year because of the good-quality activities the centre provides to prepare children and their families for school. High emphasis on promoting children's personal development and communication skills are significant factors that are helping to improve the life chances of these children. Families enjoy the many interesting sessions the centre offers. Activities, such as 'Jelly and Baby Beans' and 'Homestart', provide families with good opportunities to meet others while improving their children's physical, emotional and creative development and adults' confidence and self-esteem. Adults benefit from high-quality courses that develop their parenting skills; staff model good practice that parents can replicate at home. One parent said: 'Staff have helped me understand how to manage behaviour and instil routines – things are much better at home as a result.' Case studies show that many parents acquire skills that enable them to seek employment or access further education or training but the data are not sufficient to reflect how successful the long-term outcomes are for adults who participate.

Parents form trusting relations with staff and feel confident that they are respected and valued. Families show respect for others and appreciate that the cultures and values of others are integral to good community relations. Many talk confidently about how their children's behaviour and learning have improved, because as parents they have developed better parenting skills. Children behave well and develop valuable skills for the future, such as cooperation and independence. The centre provides good opportunities for families to voice their views through evaluations and consultations but, without a parents' forum, they have too few opportunities to influence decision making, take greater responsibility for improving provision and promote participation, particularly among fathers and target families who are not accessing services. A few volunteers support the centre's work enthusiastically; some members of the community are keen to do more to sustain provision in the area.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

<b>The extent to which children, including those from target groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>

<b>The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

**2**

The centre delivers activities in schools, churches and other venues so that families have relatively easy local access. For some families, transport is a major barrier so the centre offers support where possible to promote participation. Good links with other services ensure provision is relevant to local needs. Moving the baby clinic to the centre is proving popular because parents, carers and their children enjoy the facilities and have fun while they wait to be seen. Assessments, user feedback and effective planning enable the centre to develop its provision. Every effort is made to consult with families to modify activities, for example, 'Baby Massage' is being re-introduced following numerous requests. Families have very good access to advice on issues such as employment, benefits and housing. Case studies demonstrate that one-to-one support has been invaluable to families who, due to their circumstances, are particularly vulnerable. Increased referrals reflect that more families are being supported successfully. The range of services provided meets the needs of users who access the centre very effectively; participation rates from most groups are good. Information regarding the achievements of adults who access education and training is limited.

The centre promotes learning and development effectively through parent and child sessions, such as 'Jelly Beans', 'Pop-in and play' and high-quality parenting courses. Typical feedback from parents includes comments such as: 'We enjoy coming here, my child loves playing with other children,' and 'It's somewhere friendly to go – it is helping me and my child to learn.' The primary school acknowledges that the centre gives children a head start and prepares them well for school. Pre- and postnatal guidance is good; the centre is vigilant in identifying families that need support and ensures that other agencies are appropriately involved. Young parents are integrated well in activities. Support is targeted at families where disability is an issue and professionals, including speech therapists and counsellors, are involved effectively where relevant. Activities aimed specifically at fathers so that they contribute more to supporting their children are less evident. While the promotion of home safety is very good, the centre does not have the data to reflect the impact this has had on reducing emergency admissions of young children to hospitals.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

The centre manager and staff work hard to support families. Parents speak highly of the respect they are shown when seeking help and advice from centre staff. The centre meets its statutory duties for promoting equality and celebrating diversity well. Action to promote equality has resulted in good engagement with target groups such as lone parents, disabled children and those with special educational needs, young parents and families in crisis. Numbers of users particularly among families identified as most in need are rising.

Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and are supervised well. Day-to-day management is good; feedback from families reflects good community relations. Safeguarding meets current statutory requirements. Staff and partners have a very good understanding of the policies and procedures to ensure the protection of all users. Systems regarding the vetting and recruitment of staff are effective. All staff have had training in safeguarding. The centre prioritises staffing to support families in times of crisis and to promote safety very effectively; staff understand their role in identifying and reporting concerns and do so promptly.

Good partnerships with other services contribute to the good outcomes for families. The centre is moving effectively towards a comprehensive one-stop service to its community. Services are well integrated, some more embedded than others, but good overall. However, one or two partners do not evaluate the impact of their work or share information sufficiently, for example, regarding adult learning, so that the centre can do more to improve outcomes for more families.

Governance and accountability arrangements are generally good; there are clear links between strategic planning and service provision. The local authority and the advisory board monitor the centre's work regularly. However, parent representation in decision making is limited and parents are not involved sufficiently in leading developments at the centre. The centre's evaluation of its activities has resulted in an increase in participation levels. With limited data from some providers until recently, the priorities for improving outcomes in its delivery plan, although appropriate, are not sufficiently precise to measure the outcomes for every group rigorously, particularly for those who do not use the centre. Target setting, while improving, is not sufficiently challenging to increase the engagement of all target families more rapidly.



The centre uses feedback from users and providers well to develop its provision. The centre's many strengths include: outstanding support for families in crisis; very good guidance on home safety; good relations with most of its partner providers; effective use of volunteers to promote and sustain provision; flexible working arrangements to ensure staff are deployed to maximum effect; good outcomes for families regarding health; good outcomes for children. The centre gives good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>3</b>

## 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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

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

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us, sharing your views and contributing to the inspection of your children's centre. Those of you who use the centre benefit from good-quality provision. The centre is a warm and welcoming place and it offers you very good, practical advice on safety that you value because you say it makes a difference in the way you support your families at home. Those of you who attend the high-quality parenting courses appreciate how these help you to manage your children's behaviour. You said that you feel safe at the centre and that your children are safe too. We found that staff have a good understanding of child protection procedures and that they are all well trained.

Your children behave well; you and your children learn about how to stay healthy. You enjoy many good courses in cookery and keep fit and would like more such activities. The centre is promoting breastfeeding and fitness well. The centre offers good support and advice to mothers on the harmful effects of smoking especially on babies and young children so that more people succeed in stopping.

You enjoy sessions such as 'Jelly Beans' and 'Pop-in and play' with your children. We found that children have fun and enjoy the many activities the centre offers. The centre works with adult learning and training providers so that you improve your own education and employment opportunities. To help more of you to be successful in the future, we have asked the centre to check that you have the help that you need and to encourage more people to participate, particularly those who do not have the skills they need to move into employment or training.

The centre listens to you and asks you what you think of the services and activities it offers; it changes things because of what you say. For example, we understand that, due to popular demand, the centre is re-introducing 'Baby Massage' sessions. We have asked the centre to analyse the data it needs to improve provision and to set targets that benefit more families. We have asked the centre to involve you more in making decisions about what the centre does and encouraging more of you to lead activities.

We found that the centre tries hard to help everyone. It is keen to promote equality and diversity. The centre manager and his staff are working hard to support every family. Many of you have benefited significantly through the very good support it offers, particularly when families need help quickly. We have asked the centre to do more to engage with families in the area who do not use the centre currently.

Thank you to those of you who took the time to come in and talk with us and for letting us join you in some of your sessions. We wish you all the best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website: [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)