

Inspection report for Calcot, Theale & Area Children's Centre

Local authority	West Berkshire
Inspection number	383341
Inspection dates	2–3 February 2012
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

Centre leader	Paula Craven
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Curtis Road, Calcot, Reading RG31 4XG
Telephone number	0118 456157
Fax number	
Email address	pcraven@westberks.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

Report published: February 2012



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the children's centre manager, and staff, representatives from the local authority and the advisory board. They also spoke to partner agencies, such as the school, health services and parents.

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

Information about the centre

Calcot, Theale and Area Children's Centre is a small facility situated in the Calcot and Theale wards and part of Sulhampstead ward in West Berkshire. It is governed by the local authority and has an advisory board. It is one of ten children's centres in West Berkshire and is a phase two centre, designated in September 2007. The centre provides the full core purpose through a range of integrated services that include health, family support, adult learning courses (on and off site) and 'Stay and Play' sessions. The reach is bisected by the M4 and so outreach sessions are provided at the northern and southern end of the area. The centre shares a site with Calcot Junior and Calcot Infant schools with whom they work in partnership. Children's levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are largely in line with those expected for their age. The reach area covers eight super output areas. Six are in Calcot and two in Theale. Only one of these is in the 50% most deprived areas nationally. There is no data available for the number of families as all of the West Berkshire reach areas are in the process of being redesignated. However, it is known that there are 5,500 households with approximately 900 children under four years. Around a fifth of families are lone parent families. Up-to-date reach area data for the percentage of children under four years living in households dependent on workless benefits and the number of eligible families benefiting from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit are not available. The population is fairly stable and is predominantly of White British heritage. Around 5% of families are from minority

ethnic groups. The largest of these groups, around 2.5%, are of Asian/British Asian 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

Calcot, Theale and Area Children’s Centre is providing a satisfactory service. Staff share the manager’s passion and dedication to providing a warm, welcoming environment where good-quality care, guidance and support ensures that families, including target groups and those in most need of support, have high levels of trust in staff and feel safe. One parent, voicing the views of many, said, ‘We love the centre...the staff are extremely friendly and professional and have been an amazing support.’

The main target groups are lone parents, vulnerable families and those with disabled children. A representative proportion of parents from minority ethnic groups do come to courses and events, as do a few fathers, but lack of data for all children’s centres in the locality limits the centre’s knowledge of the proportion of families and groups within that area which it might not be reaching.

Targets are based on an accurate analysis of the families’ needs insofar as the centre is able to ascertain. The centre manager has devised her own innovative way of evaluating the work of the centre, but again, despite spending much valuable time searching, a dearth of statistical data for the area makes it difficult to measure, for example any increase in breastfeeding or decrease in the rates for obesity. The centre also shares another difficulty with the other centres in the area, in that advisory boards share the same group of professionals. As a result, attendance is not always as high as it could be and this limits the amount of strategic work that the group can undertake.

There is some parent representation on the advisory group and this makes sure that parents do have a say in what goes on in the centre. Because relationships are so good, parents’ views are regularly represented in an informal way, but there is no formal channel for this at present. However, the drive and enthusiasm for improvement from the centre manager and her skilled team means that, despite

having very few hours, a small team and very few statistics to work with, there is a trend of improvement in the centre's overall performance. This is down to the resourcefulness, ingenuity and hard work of the team. They know their families well, have built up trusting relationships and have a successful record of helping all groups, including those in most need. All of this confirms the centre's satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should provide or facilitate up-to-date reach area data to enable the centre to measure its impact on a more regular basis, especially in relation to Key Performance Indicators.
- By the end of September 2012, strengthen the advisory board so that it can play a more strategic role in supporting and advising the children's centre and in driving improvement.
- Develop the systems already in place to enable more parents to contribute formally to making strategic decisions about the direction and work of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Courses such as Parents As First Teachers (PAFT) give all parents a secure grounding in important matters such as health and hygiene including dental hygiene and hand washing. The Well-Baby Clinic helps parents overcome most of their difficulties and work towards an understanding of what is best for their children. Others have gained a better idea of healthy eating through cookery classes. Children behave well and safely in the centre. Parents are particularly well supported in helping to manage their children through structured programmes such as PAFT, which also advises parents effectively about home safety. The secure systems to access the centre's site, and very high levels of trust in staff, mean that all families spoken to during the inspection feel safe there. Staff are quick to respond to any concerns, including the relatively high prevalence of domestic violence. They are well trained in the use of the Common Assessment Framework and child protection plans. Consequently, the outcomes for these children are generally good and numbers on such plans are relatively low.

'Stay and Play' sessions help children to learn good social skills. Parents say that children will 'try things they wouldn't do at home'. Opportunities such as these ensure that children make at least satisfactory progress from their starting points. These, together with the centre's strengthening partnership with local schools and the school on-site, ensure that children are appropriately prepared for their transition to Nursery. Levels on exit from Early Years Foundation Stage have been broadly the same over the last three years with about 70% achieving a minimum of 78 points across the six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

All families who use the centre say that they enjoy coming to the centre and working with the staff. Sessions such as 'BOOST' help parents, particularly lone

parents and the most vulnerable, to develop their confidence. They say that they have learned to 'Say what I mean and mean what I say!', 'Let things I cannot change go', and 'Walk away, not to be a doormat'. Lone parents, some with postnatal depression or low self-esteem, make new friends and learn new skills on popular courses such as 'Beauty Basics' and are prompted to discuss the possibility of further training leading to job possibilities. The centre signposts parents to the local college where they can access the type of courses that will pave the way for employment. Popular courses such as 'Helping in Schools' have led to some measure of success in gaining employment in a school and mathematics courses have given some parents the appropriate skills to help their children at school.

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	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	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

Centre staff know their families well. Parents appreciate the good care, guidance and support that they receive, particularly in times of crisis. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'I have had great support when I needed it...all the staff made an effort to encourage me and really listen to whatever I had to say.' The centre tailors activities to suit their need as far as they can. Consequently, outcomes for those families are at least satisfactory. However, because the local and health authorities have been unable to provide specific data, it is difficult for the centre to identify what proportion of the target groups is being reached. Evidence that is available shows that staff are particularly effective in sustaining the involvement of lone parents, vulnerable families and parents with disabled children.

There is no specific group for fathers but they do access activities along with everyone else. Fathers' own groups have been difficult to sustain despite choosing times that were likely to be most convenient. Although few in number, families from minority ethnic groups enjoy using the centre and encourage people from their own community to join. There is currently no specific group for families who are learning to speak English as an additional language but work with individuals has helped

families to make links in the community and even negotiate housing.

'Stay and Play' promotes purposeful learning for children, although the lack of an outdoor space limits the centre's ability to cover all areas of learning equally. Two special needs group programmes for parents, 'Time Out for Special Needs' and 'Time Out from autistic spectrum disorders (ASD)', provide appropriate sources of help and support for those families who are also signposted to monthly support groups.

Antenatal groups and postnatal groups are popular with mothers, who say that it is good to know that other people are experiencing the same difficulties. The follow on group, 'Get out of the House Club', recognises the continuing need of young mothers to meet as a group, while the 'Multiples Make and Do' sessions, organised by mothers, is a useful support group for those parents with multiple births. Although budgetary cuts have meant that there are no breastfeeding groups, information, resources (including a free compact disc) and guidance on breastfeeding are offered at the centre and at the 'Well-Baby Clinics'.

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

In this small centre, the manager has to take on many of the day-to-day tasks of running a centre with no caretaker and little ancillary support. The whole team are very hard-working and committed, and at times, overstretched, in order to develop an integrated provision that meets the needs of all the families that they know. The centre manager's drive and enthusiasm permeates the whole centre. Staff share her focus on improving areas of weakness and bridging gaps in provision and outcomes. Trusting relationships between key partners such as the school, local college and health practitioners have been formed to meet the majority of needs so far as they are known within the local area. As a result, despite a few remaining weaknesses, there has always been a continued trend of improvement.

Governance and accountability arrangements are in place, but the advisory board is not as strong as it could be in terms of numbers and consequently the support that it gives the centre. However, the centre manager and the staff know their families well. They know where the centre's strengths and areas for development lie and work hard to implement appropriate plans aimed at improving the relevant outcomes of the centre to the satisfaction of all those who use it. Provision and services are used

well by a range of families from the reach area, but the centre is limited by the lack of data to tell them just how much of the reach area they are serving. The centre gives satisfactory value for money.

The centre actively promotes equality and diversity, and tackles discrimination. It ensures equal access by all groups known to the centre, to provide specialist help for parents with children who have a disability, translators for those who speak English as an additional language and well-targeted support to narrow the gap for the most disadvantaged groups. This promotion of inclusion has ensured that the centre is a cohesive community. However, as in all of its work, the centre works well with the groups it knows but is hampered by the lack of data about the whole reach area.

Procedures, systems and record keeping for safeguarding are good and demonstrate effective practice. Well-trained staff not only ensure that the priority is given to safeguarding all children, but equip parents with the skills knowledge and understanding to ensure that this is carried on within the home. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are good and child protection arrangements are secure and updated regularly. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly and careful records are kept. Early intervention and accurately tailored work delivered by skilled family support workers to families suffering domestic violence or who are in need of emotional help and guidance ensures the safety of all, including the most vulnerable.

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 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 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	3
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	3
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

Nothing applicable.

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 Calcot, Theale and Area Children's Centre on 2–3 February 2012. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

During our visit, we looked at your centre's safeguarding documents, plans for development and numerous other documents. We spoke to a range of partner agencies working with the centre as well as staff, members of the advisory board and a representative from the local authority. We also visited the activities taking place during the inspection and spoke to a substantial number of users of the centre. Thank you for your participation in the inspection. Those of you we spoke to were unanimous in your praise for all the centre staff have done for you and your children. One parent, reflecting the views of many, said, 'The centre is so warm and welcoming and the staff are so friendly.' Several spoke of the dedication of the staff who give '100%' and will go beyond what is expected of them to ensure help for specific problems is offered. Many of you told us directly how the centre had given you confidence in various aspects of your life and in some instances had changed your lives considerably for the better. The support the centre has given in helping your children learn and develop has also been positive because you are more confident in managing your children's behaviour, knowing what to do to make sure that they are safe at home, and cooking healthy food. One parent said, 'It is helpful to know that others are worried about the same thing.'

The care, guidance and support provided for you are good. This is because the staff know everyone so well and therefore can target support and know who to call to give specialist help. As a result, relationships are positive and this helps towards the satisfactory and sometimes good outcomes that are achieved by the centre. The centre listens to your views well and there is some parent representation on the advisory board. We have asked the centre to find ways for even more of you to take part in planning the work of the centre. We have also asked that the centre strengthens the advisory board so that it can give the centre even more support in its work with you.

The centre manager and her staff work hard to make sure that the centre meets all of your needs. Unfortunately, they have not been able to get hold of all the information they need about who lives in the area and so it could be that there are

some people who the centre is not yet reaching. In order to do this, we have asked the local authority to provide the centre with more up-to-date data about the area so that it can measure how well it is doing and target the groups that are not yet accessing the services on offer.

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