

Inspection report for Belmore Children's Centre

Local authority	Hillingdon
Inspection number	383386
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Belmore Nursery and Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	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 co-located/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 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 the manager of the centre and other staff as well as a wide range of representatives from the local authority, including health service professionals. Meetings were also held with the assistant headteacher of the adjoining primary school. Inspectors talked to parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including evaluations of services, case studies, other records, development plans and the centre's most recent review report together with local authority data.

Information about the centre

Belmore Children's Centre opened in January 2008 and is a phase two centre. . It is housed in purpose-built accommodation, sharing the site with Belmore Nursery and Primary School. The local authority now finances and governs the provision. There is an advisory group which provides adds to the leadership and management of the centre. The centre is open for 52 weeks a year from Monday to Friday.

The children's centre reach area includes the surrounding roads within the Barnhill area. The population is ethnically and socially very mixed. The largest groups are from Asian and African heritages. Furthermore, this centre is also used by families out of the reach area. A high proportion of families speak English as an additional language.

Two thirds of families in the area are lone parents and a high proportion of parents and carers are young mothers. Just over a half of all children under five are from

workless households. An above-average proportion of families receive benefits. A few children and parents have special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Just over 600 families are registered with the centre and attendance rates are broadly a half of this figure. The centre meets all elements of the core purpose, which include health services, family support and outreach, and activities to promote children's and parents' all-round development and well-being.

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

Belmore Children's Centre provides a good and improving service that meets parents' and children's needs well. Recent surveys show that parents are unanimous in their praise for the welcome that they receive and enjoy attending. They agree that the centre enables them to enrich their lives. They gain confidence, skills, friendship and parenting skills, which supports their family life. As one parent said, 'Thank you for playing such a big part in our lives.'

The centre works successfully to include all target groups. It meets the needs of those who have experienced domestic violence very well so that they are empowered to reshape their lives. Although a focus, there remains room for greater engagement with the youngest teenage mothers, and families would like more activities for fathers.

Staff know the families who use the centre well. In particular, the care, guidance and support offered are good because they are well tailored to individual needs and help families especially well in times of crisis. Support is sensitive and underpinned by an effective partnership with a wide range of services. Inter-agency work, together with robust child protection procedures, has resulted in effective safeguarding procedures. One parent explained it like this, 'I feel really happy and safe in coming to the centre with my child.'

As a result of effective partnerships with health, education and social welfare agencies, most parents are empowered to improve their individual and family lives leading to good outcomes overall. Careful attention is given to helping adults to gain the skills needed to enable them to return to work or gain employment for the first time. A large majority of parents are delighted with the way that activities help them to learn positive behaviour management techniques, overcome stress and adopt healthy lives. Of note is the successful training programme for volunteers to gain key skills to enable them to move on to opportunities in childcare.

Children benefit from the smooth transition, to either the on-site nursery school or other nursery provision. Provision to help children to learn and develop is good and includes interesting, well-resourced activities. Aided by strong governance, the centre manager and assistant headteacher at the school work well in partnership to evaluate the centre's strengths and areas for development. This has led to a clear development plan to which parents also contribute. However, the involvement of parents in the more formal governance of the centre is at an early stage of development. Better use of data, although improving securely, is key to ensuring that the centre's self-evaluation is as searching as possible. Everyone is ambitious to make the centre outstanding, but targets are not always challenging to ensure that the outcomes for the large majority of families are high. Taken overall, the centre's capacity to sustain improvement is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the overall effectiveness of the centre so that it becomes outstanding by:
 - using data as rigorously as possible to evaluate the effectiveness of the outcomes for users of the centre
 - ensuring that further action is taken to involve young parents, especially teenage mothers
 - building on the firm start already made to tailor more provision to fathers' needs and interests, including weekend activities
 - making sure that the development plan has challenging targets that are measureable and realistic in the drive to improve outcomes to outstanding
 - ensuring that more parents are involved in the governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Health outcomes are improving well. Rates of breastfeeding are higher than average. All groups do well in widening their commitment to developing healthy lifestyles through projects such as 'Change for Life'. Although the centre does not have specific data, informal evaluations of activities to reduce obesity, improve dental health and increase smoking cessation indicate that the large majority of users benefit from these courses.

In the Borough of Hillingdon as a whole, there has been a falling rate of admissions to hospital accident and emergency departments over the last three years for minor injuries. The work of the centre aids this through popular first-aid courses. Immunisation rates are improving well, although they remain slightly below average. The increased focus on this, through baby clinics and additional health checks, helps parents to feel confident about immunisations.

The centre's work ensures that family lives are improved. Staff listen to parents' views informally, but only relatively few are involved in the governance of the centre through the advisory group. Nonetheless, over a half of families with young children, within the reach, engage with the centre. A high proportion of lone parents benefit greatly, especially in making new friends and in developing their parenting and work skills. Target groups do well and, as a result, children develop into active and inquisitive learners.

There is a very strong partnership between social and health workers as well as with the school. Procedures to protect and keep children safe are good. If needed, children are quickly put on child protection plans. There is clear evidence to show that families in circumstances that make them more vulnerable are very effectively supported by nurturing programmes and a range of parenting programmes. These ensure that parents are helped to manage their children with increasing success and this often helps keep families together or enables regular access to care by others.

Parents agree that they gain much from the work-related activities that promote self-confidence. For example, they learn how to use computers and the internet in order to put together a curriculum vitae (CV). As one parent/volunteer explained, 'The training and advice I received at the children's centre helped me to get my current job.' Also, parents greatly value the training in developing positive behaviour patterns in their children, which help to reduce stress in family life.

The work of the centre is focused on closing the gap between the bottom 20% of the community so that they can thrive educationally, socially and in their health outcomes.

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

Parents and carers describe provision as a very personalised experience and agree that staff know them very well. The centre is successfully meeting the needs of most groups in the reach and the wider community.

Parents and carers, especially young mums, enjoy the cookery sessions. One explained how she realised that cooking with her children 'encourages them to eat well'. Another commented, 'My children are now enjoying healthy snacks which keep them full until their lunches.' Another commented, 'I kept a food diary and recognised I was eating an unhealthy diet. I took on board information and now thoroughly enjoy attending the cookery club.'

Leaders focus provision effectively on target groups, but there is more to do to make this outstanding. For example, the centre works closely with representatives from the Tamil Women's Group and the Family Caring Trust Group, together with health visitors and midwives, to support young mothers. The engagement of this group within the centre is sometimes good but occasionally opportunities are missed to attract teenage mums unless they are referred specifically to the centre.

Following the high demand by parents who speak English as an additional language, the centre has provided more English language classes leading to a significant increase in the proportion of parents gaining Entry Level and Level 1 qualifications. Over the last year, 80% of adult learners gained a basic skill qualification which has enabled them to proceed to further training. As one parent commented, 'I am now working as a volunteer in the school and my long-term goal will be to get a job.' This is raising aspirations, especially for those who have historically come from workless households.

Parents and carers greatly value the specially targeted 'drop in' services, such as 'Baby-Signing' for speech and language support. These help to reassure them about their children's development and guidance when additional help is needed. Often, parents and carers register at the centre initially through signposting by the midwife or health visitor. Parents then take advantage of other provision and they explained how they like being able to meet professionals in a 'child-friendly and safe environment'.

Stay and play sessions are very popular. As one parent explained, 'Activities like this are great because my child gets the opportunity to create with glitter and glues, which I can't do at home.' The centre remains focused on improving the social and early language and communication skills for all children. The increased emphasis on enjoying stories through role play was evident during the inspection when children delighted in preparing their lunch and sharing it with their friends.

Fathers are beginning to be more involved in the centre because leaders are listening to what parents want and they are joining in a range of activities. However, there are no specific 'dads or male carers' groups and opportunities for weekend events are at a very early planning stage.

Several elements of care are impressive, for example the gaining of parents' confidence to talk about domestic violence. The centre works very closely with the Family Caring Trust group to provide very informative and supportive courses. Women agree that they are empowered to make better relationships and feel good about themselves. Evaluations from courses clearly show how parents feel. As one parent said, 'I now feel stronger and able to get the best for my children. I really appreciate the care and support I received from the centre when I felt hopeless.' Often, this group overcomes its problems and gets back to work or further training.

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 manager's drive, enthusiasm and focus on improvement are shared by all staff and parents. The centre is a welcoming and friendly setting where relationships are warm and positive. Leaders at all levels have the promotion of inclusion, equality of opportunity and zero tolerance of any discrimination at the heart of their work. Diversity is celebrated and embraced, through the availability of leaflets in different languages and the recruitment of volunteers who are representative of the local community. As a result, the centre is closing the gap between the bottom 20% of the community so that they can thrive educationally, socially and in their health outcomes.

Staff are effective in removing barriers such as low self-esteem, gaps in knowledge and understanding, low levels of education and poor parenting skills. The development plan focuses explicitly on improving the lives of all families including target groups. The centre provides good value for money, runs extremely smoothly and uses its resources effectively to meet the needs of the reach area and wider community. Central to the work of the whole leadership team lies a highly integrated multi-agency partnership.

Governance and accountability arrangements are well defined. These, together with

highly integrated multi-agency partnership, ensures that services are well integrated and reflective so that there is a smooth flow of information between the centre and the school. Leaders have been working to use data more effectively to strengthen the evaluation of outcomes for all groups. This has led to effective links being made with the data team at the local authority to gather ever-increasing information about the impact of the work of the centre. As yet, much of this analysis is very new and has not yet become embedded at all leadership levels to make target setting as effective as possible.

The impact of leaders' good work is evident for almost all target groups. For example, disabled parents and children are becoming increasingly involved. This has led to an improvement in how well children develop their social, speaking and physical skills through the 'Bubbles' group. As one parent commented, 'My child has special needs and attends the 'little seed' group, and is improving every day.'

Parents' views have been sought over many aspects of the centre's work and this has led to modifications of provision and timings of activities. Parents have become increasingly involved in volunteering to help with activities, but too few take a more formal lead in sharing their views.

The centre has effective procedures for safeguarding and risk assessment. These meet government guidelines and include high-quality checks on adults and a carefully planned approach to child protection. Well-trained staff not only ensure that safeguarding children is given a high priority, but also equips parents with the skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure that this and safety arrangements are implemented within the home.

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

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	2
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Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Belmore Children's Centre on 2 and 3 February 2012. We judged the centre to be good and improving. We know that you agree that the setting is, in your words, 'very welcoming'. Someone said, 'It's like a small community of support and advice that is really friendly.' Like you, we were very impressed by the warmth of support and welcome provided by the manager, the assistant head of the school and the good governance by the local authority. Everyone works together to make sure that your individual needs are well met because partnerships with different organisations are outstanding. You often spoke about the fantastic help that you receive and how the centre is a lifeline to you. The work of the centre reduces depression, loneliness and you have fun. Lone parents benefit considerably from the support of the centre.

You explained that staff quickly respond to your comments and ideas by altering services. They know that you would like more activities for fathers, especially at weekend, and plans are underway for this. The centre is delighted that you so keenly share your ideas and would like more of you to become involved in more formal advisory groups to help with the governance of the centre. We agree that this would be a good development as it would really help the leadership of the centre to become outstanding in the future. Please try to help with this in whichever way you can.

The partnerships with others are well developed in terms of making sure that you have access to the services that you need and want. Especially, this ensures that you and your children are safe and develop important life skills and emotional well-being. As a result, you benefit from good care and guidance, often when you are most worried or feeling low. We were especially impressed in the way that the centre supports families facing domestic violence.

We enjoyed seeing several of the activities and looking at a vast number of your comments following evaluations. These clearly show how you gain much from the parenting courses, such as first aid and healthy living activities. There are good

opportunities for you to learn life-changing skills linked to getting back to work. You spoke about having interesting activities to do and plenty of help with child development, home difficulties, financial worries and such things as breastfeeding and weaning. We must congratulate you on how well you have taken on board the information about being healthy and safe. The help provided for you to learn about how to manage your child's behaviour is also very helpful.

You agree that you feel welcomed whatever your specific needs or background. We confirm that attendance rates and community cohesion are strong. Notably, we could see that you make friends and this helps you to manage the new demands of being a parent. You are helped to understand how your children learn. Such things as 'Baby moves' and 'Rhyme and Playtime' contribute much to your children's development.

Many of you go on to gain additional qualifications that help you to go on to further training, return to work or gain employment for the first time. We were delighted to see how so many different groups are involved in the centre. The centre is correctly working to involve even more young parents, especially teenage parents. It has also recognised that there are insufficient activities for fathers.

Leadership is good. Leaders are always looking at ways to improve. They are endeavouring to make better use of data as it becomes available and are keen to set ambitious targets to enable the centre to become outstanding in the future. There is still more to do in these areas.

Your contributions to the inspection were greatly appreciated and we would like to thank those of you who took the time to meet with us. Thank you for your willingness to talk with us about some of your personal experiences.

Best wishes to you and your families.

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