

Inspection report for Compass Point Children's Centre

Local authority	Bristol
Inspection number	383412
Inspection dates	7–8 February 2012
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Linked school if applicable	Compass Point Primary School
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.

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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 registered early years' childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 staff, with parents, a representative of the local authority, members of the children's centre committee of the governing body, various health professionals and members of the Bristol inclusion team. They observed a family service meeting, which was hosted at the Compass Point centre, and attended by a representative of the local Bishopsworth children's centre and the youth service team, as well as the centre's staff and two health professionals.

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

Information about the centre

Compass Point is a phase 2 centre which opened in 2008. It is situated within the same building as the primary school. The local area is amongst the 30% most deprived areas, although there are pockets of more affluent families and adults achieving qualifications in higher education. Many families make good use of the centre's early years provision and wrap around care because both parents and carers are in employment, but the data show that 14.42% of households are in receipt of workless benefits. The number of families from minority ethnic groups is currently 11.7% and growing, with an increasing Polish population. A Traveller site is on the edge of the reach area. The boundary of the reach area changed in 2009, but many of the families already working with the centre continue to attend its activities and to

receive support. Many of these families are from the most vulnerable groups and in receipt of the Bristol City arranged enhanced provision. The percentage of obese children in the reception years is below the Bristol average and there is an above average proportion of mothers breastfeeding. The number of children being vaccinated is above the Bristol average at 96.8%, and so many of the usual health concerns have not been a specific focus for the centre. The number of children registered with the centre has grown steadily up to 500 in October 2011. The percentage of children from its reach area engaged in centre activities was 57.7%. A further 42% of children from vulnerable families, who live in the adjacent reach area, continue to attend Compass Point as it is the nearest centre to them. Children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with a range of skills and knowledge that is often below that expected for their age. Foundation Stage Profile scores in 2010 were 44.4% for children who achieve a total of at least 78 points, with at least 6 points scored in each of the personal, social and emotional development (PSED) and communication, language and literacy (CLL) scales.

The children's centre has its own manager but the headteacher of the school has responsibility for its overall provision. The centre is governed by the school governing body through its children's centre committee. Compass Point Primary School and the children's centre are part of the South West Bristol Cooperative Learning Trust, a partnership which includes three other schools and various other groups within the community dedicated to improving the opportunities for families within the local area. The centre provides a variety of family services as part of its core offer including integrated child care and early learning, family support and outreach provision, links to Jobcentre Plus and support for the local childminder network. It has strong links with the local health professionals who have an office in the children's centre, along with Bristol inclusion team, Connexions and the youth service team.

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

Compass Point is a good children's centre which is making a positive impact on the

lives of families and children in the area. A welcoming, friendly and supportive staff and a good range of activities have increased the number of families who benefit from what the centre has to offer. Parents and carers are rightly proud of their children's centre, many commented that it was a lovely place to meet up with other families. Many parents also referred to the high levels of support they received from the staff. They unanimously say that the centre understands and meets their diverse needs well, listens to their views and ensures everyone has equal opportunities to participate.

A particular strength is in the way staff work with vulnerable families. The centre is part of a local authority initiative which enables those families who are identified as facing particularly challenging circumstances to receive extended early years provision. The strategy also puts a responsibility on the parent and/or carer to participate in some form of family support, which is having a positive impact on their understanding of how their children learn and develop as well as on their safety and happiness at home. Staff place a high focus on keeping children and their families safe and are diligent in ensuring all safeguarding procedures are followed, including the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF). Strong interagency working, particularly with health professionals, and cohesive systems enable these families to be identified quickly and given high levels of support.

Parents and carers enjoy the children's activities, such as the Rock a Bye group and the drop-in sessions of stay and play as much as their child, and often progress from one activity to the next as their child grows. The provision for children aged from birth to three years (Penguins) is well planned and effectively focused on children's interests and needs. The children achieve well and are well prepared for the next steps in learning in the nursery class (Tigers). Adult education courses are also regular events, but there are not as many opportunities for adults to extend their skills and interests at the centre. Information on further courses held elsewhere are shared with all those who are interested, but the range of opportunities for adults to increase their learning and so prepare for employment are limited..Parents' views and suggestions about the centre's services and the different activities it provided are very much encouraged by the staff and many help shape services and evaluate their effectiveness. Fewer parents, however, are involved formally in helping the centre to improve through the work of the governing body.

The centre staff are evaluative and committed to providing the very best support for their families. Under the clear leadership of the manager, the staff are constantly seeking ways to improve. Data about the reach are increasingly used to underpin their evaluations and support their development plans. Staff are well supported by the governing body's children centre committee, but members recognise they need to monitor the centre's work more carefully and provide greater challenge so it continues to improve. At present there are insufficient clear targets for the centre to achieve. Despite the lack of challenging targets, the centre has gone from strength to strength and the strong track record of improvements is evidence of the good capacity for further improvement. The number of families benefiting from the support and services it provides has grown steadily. The centre provides well for

families of all backgrounds, particularly those in challenging circumstances who live around the centre, both in its reach area and outside of it. There is a positive focus on engaging new parents to the area through the One World group, which provides good opportunities for families of all ethnic groups to meet and develop friendships. The centre has been less successful in engaging with families living in the southern part of the reach area which include families from minority ethnic groups and the Traveller community.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the centre's contact with families in the southern part of the reach area so they too benefit from the services and support the centre provides.
- Increase the opportunities for parents and carers to develop their interests, skills and knowledge and to contribute to the governance of the centre through membership of a parents' forum or similar group.
- Develop strategies by which the governing body children's centre committee challenges the work of the centre through the use of robust targets for improvement.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Data show that child obesity is not a particular concern for the centre as it affects only 8% of children going into Reception, but the staff still provide a variety of activities aimed raising parents' understanding of healthy eating. The very popular cookery group helped those parents who attended to learn to cook nourishing meals within a budget. Children have many opportunities to exercise and are given health snacks to support their healthy development. There are fewer activities that promote the importance of exercise for adults. Staff are trained as breastfeeding champions and support mothers if the need arises, but other local groups work very effectively in this area so there has been no particular need to set up a support group. A recent area of focus has been to promote families better dental care and has resulted in raising parents' and children's awareness of the need to clean their teeth daily.

Outcomes for most children are good because of the cohesive provision and consistent approaches of the centre and its early years partners in the primary school. Strong, integrated team work and common procedures between the different groups ensure a strong and continuous thread of support for families and a smooth transition for parents, carers and children. The Foundation Stage Profile shows the gap is narrowing between the lowest 20% of children and the rest and stood at 22.7% in 2010. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and make good progress.

Children feel safe and are kept very safe at the centre. They are encouraged to be aware of their own and others' safety when they play. Parents are helped to identify potential dangers and to keep their children safe. There is a strong focus on safety

within the centre and clear expectations to parents about their responsibility for looking after their child at activities such as drop-in stay and play sessions. The centre staff and health professionals have also had a big impact on the safety of families in their own homes. Effective work with vulnerable families is reducing the need for CAFs. However, staff are quick to recognise the signs of mental ill health or domestic violence and initiate the required assessments so that appropriate levels of support can be put into place and children are well protected.

Children of different ages in the drop-in sessions relate well to each other and show good levels independence. Parents and children get a great deal of pleasure from these activities and frequently commented on how much they have learnt, especially from the sensory groups developed from the PEEPs programme (Peers Early Educational Partnership). They could be seen gaining great enjoyment from playing with their children, becoming aware of how they learn so they can support them, and gaining confidence in their own abilities in the process.

Parents are encouraged to comment on the centre’s services and the extent to which activities meet their needs and those of their children. Parents’ voice sheets evaluate activities and staff are always ready to listen to any suggestions. One parent suggested a twins group, and a grandparent suggested that other grandparents who often looked after the children would also enjoy attending. These are now in place. Two parents are members of the governing body children’s centre committee and gather parents’ views, but there is no formal parents’ group. Plans and actions by the manager are leading towards one.

Childcare provision in the centre is highly regarded as it enables parents to work knowing their child is safe. Good support is given by staff to the lone parent group about benefits, managing debt and housing issues, and through the regular visits made by a Jobcentre Plus representative. Those wishing to return to work are supported by the volunteer programme. Three parents currently work as volunteers in the different settings in the centre and the school. Two are going on to further education. One is now a foster parent. Those who access training are enthused to do more, but there has not been a high demand for additional courses.

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
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How good is the provision?

2

Staff provide good levels of support, advice and guidance for whoever comes into the centre. One parent's comment typifies this care, 'They always find time for you.' This results in families feeling confident in the support they will receive. The ongoing support, engagement of outside agencies, where appropriate, and advice have ensured children are safeguarded, and the families enabled to get the support they need. This includes personal support for those in violent relationships. The mental health, confidence and self-esteem of adults are well promoted. Many aspects of care, support and guidance are provided by the well-trained staff, but some activities are not available at the centre and adults are signposted towards the rolling programme developed with other local centres. Staff signpost adults who wish to cease smoking, for example, to a local children's centre where staff have been trained to support them and who have had a good measure of success. Childminders meet at the centre each week and staff support their training needs so they too become an effective layer of support for families and their children. The monthly dads' group is growing in popularity as is the group for grandparents. The range of opportunities for learning and development are good, particularly for children.

Assessment of families' needs is effective and used well to ensure services meet the needs of the majority of families using the centre. The staff know the families well. Good, trusting relationships enable the staff to support families to overcome difficulties and well-focused support during home visits has addressed issues specific to specific families. Outside agencies and multi-agency working are used successfully to identify further needs and allocate support.

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

Leadership at all levels is good and staff are highly committed to the successful support of all their families and children. Good staff development procedures and supervision have resulted in regular professional training to meet the needs of

families and to support staff in developing their interests and strengths. The governing body is well informed about the centre's provision. However, no clear targets are set for its ongoing improvement and the centre development plan has little focus on measuring how successful the staff have been in their improvements. Safeguarding is at the heart of all of the centre's work. The good policies and procedures are well understood by staff and parents alike. Thorough checks are made on all adults who work with children. Effective training in safeguarding and child protection ensures that procedures are carried out rigorously. Strong inter-agency working ensures children and families with protection plans are well monitored.

There is a strong commitment to meeting the needs of the most vulnerable families and their children. The centre's work is enhanced extremely well through links with a wide range of partners. Excellent partnerships with the staff in the primary school, especially the early years practitioners who work across the Early Years Foundation Stage, are resulting in children's good achievement. Strong partnerships with the health professionals ensure good levels of support and advice on a range of health-related issues. Services are carefully integrated within the centre and with other local centres and services so outcomes for children and their families are good. The centre welcomes all families that 'come to their door' and promotes good levels of community understanding through its activities. Promoting all children's good progress, and the strong focus on eliminating any form of inequality, can be clearly seen in the good provision for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Effective systems of support, good partnership working with the parents and the expertise of the inclusion team on site ensure children's good progress and development. Consequently, the centre provides good value for money. Resources are managed well. Staff are used flexibly so that a wide range of services can be provided. The centre building is used effectively to accommodate centre partners which promotes high levels of communication and very effective integrated working.

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	3

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

The registered provision for children between birth and three years was inspected in the same week as the children’s centre and its findings supported the judgements here. The report can be found on the Ofsted website.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Compass Point Children’s Centre on 7 and 8 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

During the inspection, we talked with parents, staff, partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak to us to share your thoughts about the centre.

You told us how friendly and approachable everyone is and how happy you and your children are when they are at the centre. We could see that those of you who use the centre regularly enjoy and benefit from all it has to offer, such as the drop-in sessions each Wednesday and Friday. All of you we spoke to told us how much you enjoyed using the centre. It has made a big difference in many children’s and families lives, particularly those facing challenges that make life difficult. We could see how much you enjoyed activities where you could play with your children and to help them learn, such as in the Rock a Bye and the sensory groups. The dads’ group is also proving very popular which is great.

The centre helps you in so many ways, for example the support it provides for lone parents and those of you who are experiencing difficulties at home. It provides valuable support and practical help to make your homes safer for your children and useful guidance to help you with their learning. Many of you share your ideas about the centre and help the staff think of new activities and groups. We heard that the grandparents’ group and the twins’ group came from your good suggestions. A few of you also attend the governing body’s children centre committee to help the

centre's development, but we have asked that more parents are given the opportunity to help in this process through the formation of a parents' group.

The centre works extremely well with the staff in Penguins and Tigers so that your children make good progress in their learning and development. Several parents told us about the PLODS, and how useful these comments are in helping you understand how your child is progressing, as well as showing their next important steps. There are also very good working partnerships with health visitors. Everyone shares information really well so that the centre can provide good-quality care, guidance and support. You told us that staff are friendly and that the centre offers a warm welcome to everyone. The close attention paid to safeguarding arrangements helps you feel safe and free from risks. We agree that these features are really important. We could see all the children's activities were making a very positive impact on their enjoyment and their progress, but we feel there is room for more activities and courses that are designed for the adults to enjoy and to learn new skills. We have asked the centre to provide more of these courses.

The centre manager and staff team are doing a good job in making sure that the centre responds to local needs and have built strong partnerships with a range of providers to deliver services together. The families around the centre are well supported and a good number are benefiting from the many activities and support provided. A part of the local area isn't joining in quite as much so we have asked the staff to concentrate on this area and to engage with parents there more effectively so they too can benefit from the services that you already enjoy. The manager and staff use lots of information, as well as your ideas, to improve the centre's work and they are very effective in developing the services so they meet your families' needs well. We have asked the governing body's committee to help this process by giving the committee support, as it does now, but also to challenge the members so that the centre improves further.

It was a pleasure to meet you during the inspection and to hear your views. We hope that you and your children and many more families who live in and around the Bedminster area will continue to enjoy and benefit from the many activities and services the centre offers. Thank you again for contributing to the inspection by sharing your comments and thoughts so openly.

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