

# Inspection report for Bysing Wood Children's Centre

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<b>Local authority</b>	Kent County Council
<b>Inspection number</b>	383401
<b>Inspection dates</b>	28—29 February 2012
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Paul Armitage

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<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	Not applicable
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<b>Linked school if applicable</b>	Bysing Wood Primary School
<b>Linked early years and childcare, if applicable</b>	Rainbow Pre-School

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 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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, other staff, health and outreach professionals, representatives of linked bodies, parents, carers, and representatives of the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

## Information about the centre

Bysing Wood Children's Centre is located in Swale on the eastern side of Faversham in Kent. It opened in March 2008 as a phase two centre and achieved full core status in 2009. Working closely with statutory and voluntary linked organisations, it offers a wide range of health and other family support services. It is one of two centres in the locality which offer the full range of ante- and post-natal services. The centre delivers outreach activities from West Faversham Community Centre and Teynham Community Hall.

The centre shares its manager with the neighbouring St Mary's Children's Centre and services to families are divided between the two centres. The present manager has been in post on a temporary basis since January because the previous manager is now managing three other centres, also on a temporary basis.

The area served by the centre is about two thirds rural and one third urban but most of the population is concentrated in two urban areas close to the centre where there is a high level of deprivation. In the centre's area as a whole, there are 878 children under five. In the urban areas of high deprivation, there are 251 children.

The vast majority of the population are of White British heritage. There are a small, highly mobile proportion of people from many of the countries of eastern Europe. There are also small Gypsy and Traveller communities, some of whom are mobile and other permanently resident in the area. Unemployment is high and rising. The most recently available figures for Swale indicate that 24% of children aged 0 to 5 live in workless households and 12% of eligible families benefit from the childcare element of Working Tax Credit. There is both private and social housing with the percentage of accommodation that is rented rising fast. Children's levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are in line with what is expected for their age.

A number of organisations are involved in the governance of the centre. There is an advisory board with members representing the broad range of services offered by the centres. The board has an overview of all ten centres in Swale. There is also a steering group with similar membership but at a more local level. Direct links with the local authority are provided by a link officer. There is also a parents' forum which provides advice.

## 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

Bysing Wood is located in a diverse community where there are areas of wealth but also areas of high deprivation. It addresses the needs of this community well.

It offers a wide range of services resulting in improved lifestyles for many people of all ages. Vulnerable families are supported with care and sensitivity. Staff in the various services based at the centre work well together. They are good at identifying problems and finding successful solutions. Children subject to child protection plans are well looked after and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used to good effect. Safeguarding arrangements at the centre are good.

Families achieve well. People of all ages and backgrounds are supported so that they improve their knowledge and understanding in various ways. The development of

self-confidence is a notable feature. Some adults become volunteers and some use their learning and experience to find jobs. There is a good National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) programme linked primarily to childcare. Children learn basic skills; the centre provides a good start to the activities that children will experience in Nursery and Reception classes. Links with partner organisations such as Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary sector are used well to support families' needs.

Adults at the centre play an important part in the way that it is run. There is a strong parents' forum. Some parents serve on the advisory board and steering group.

Leadership and management at the centre are good. Central is the strong link with the local authority through the link officer. This is supplemented by the constructive support of staff and the parents' forum, both of which have good intelligence on the needs of the community. Together these bodies ensure good quality self-evaluation and clear targets although some of the documentation recording this is less good in quality and thus not helpful to the centre and others. The roles of the new advisory board and the steering group are less clear, raising questions about their purpose and effectiveness.

Because outcomes are good and because the local authority, managers and staff know the quality of what they are doing, the capacity to improve is good.

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

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Review the roles of the advisory board and the steering group so that their place in the strategic management of the centre is clear and effective.
- Improve the quality of key documentation, such as the action plan, so that such documents can assist the centre in the planning and evaluation of its work and provide others with a clear picture of the centre's direction and performance.

## **How good are outcomes for families?**

<b>2</b>
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Outcomes for children and families and are good. Interviews with three adult members of vulnerable families illustrate this. One mother who speaks English as an additional language described how from a situation of despair, staff helped her regain confidence. She got a job using the centre's own database, became a volunteer and then became a member of the advisory board. A father spoke of how the centre helped him come to terms with losing a job and becoming what he described as a 'house-husband'. He felt isolated, joined the 'Dads' Forum' and met with others in similar circumstances. He got involved in the work of the forum, made a video about its work, raised money for charity and finally was helped to train as a sports coach. One interviewee commented, 'there's always someone there who knows what to do' and another said, 'they are always on the same page', meaning that staff understood both the person and the difficulties.

Outcomes for children are equally good. Families benefit from the identification of problems by midwives and health visitors, and older children benefit from a wide range of interesting, enjoyable opportunities, such as 'Messy Hands', the parent-toddler group and 'Stepping Stones'. Parents, carers and children enjoy working with the community chef on the preparation of healthy food as part of the centre's efforts to address obesity. All activities provide opportunities to socialise and develop intellectually and it is good to see the way in which children and adults of very different backgrounds get on well together and children's behaviour is good. One example of good outcomes is the way in which the activities in 'Stepping Stones' are guided by the stages in children's development outlined in the Early Years Foundation Stage practice guidance. In this way, children develop knowledge and understanding which is helpful to them in Nursery and Reception.

The various services provided by the centre work very well together to ensure that vulnerable children are safe. Interviews with staff from the various services illustrate the careful attention they pay to understanding families' difficulties and finding ways to address them. The work with children subject to child protection plans and the use of CAF processes are pursued with care.

Parents and carers make a good contribution to decision making. There is an active parents' forum which makes a significant contribution to developing the centre's programme. Parents and carers also serve on the steering committee and the advisory board.

Adults are successfully developing skills for the future. There is a substantial volunteer programme; currently, 15 volunteers work jointly in Bysing Wood and St Mary's children's centres. There are 18 volunteers and other parents and carers taking NVQs at level 2 and level 3 with the intention of returning to work. English as a second language (ESOL) courses are available through local adult education centres. Bysing Wood is informed of jobs in its vicinity and it advertises these. It also has good links with Connexions and Jobcentre Plus and parents and carers speak enthusiastically about the support these have provided with advice on both benefits and employment.

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>2</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>
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## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The extent to which the services provided by the centre meet the needs of local families is good.

Data provided by the local authority indicate that in the last quarter of 2011, 75% of children in the area served by the centre, 74% of lone parents, 80% of disabled carers and nearly all teenage mothers used the centre. An important feature is the significant increase in the number of people using the centre in 2011 and a particularly encouraging increase in numbers from target groups in the two most deprived areas. However, staff have correctly identified three groups using the centre less than others – east Europeans (attendance 58%); male carers (51%); and Gypsies and Travellers (almost nil). Outreach workers are now quickly developing successful contacts on the fruit farms where east Europeans mainly work and the centre has established a programme called 'Little Voices' aimed at providing opportunities for all bilingual families in the area to socialise and to play. Male carers are being offered a range of support including 'Soccer Tots' and the 'Dads' Forum', the latter having objectives that are pragmatic, reflecting the needs of its members which are often related to a return to work. The programme relating to Gypsies and Travellers is to start shortly and is well planned. It seeks to encourage these groups to use the centre's services and develop mutual understanding with the wider community. It involves all ten centres in Swale.

There are many other examples that could be cited which demonstrate how the centre's provision is linked to local needs and provides opportunities to learn and to become more confident. One example is the support given to young parents aged 13 to 20. A key feature of the work with this group is its inter-agency nature. For example, one case study showed how the young parent support coordinator involved the community involvement worker, Family Action, Homestart, Connexions, housing and benefit services, health services, the local nursery, the play and outreach service, 'Care to Learn', and the community chef. A second example is the help given to the disabled. The centre provides a drop-in facility aimed at providing socialising and information services for adults and play facilities for children. There is a weekly portage session when needs are assessed and suitable support planned and provided. The play and outreach worker often attends homes to see what help is required. The centre is also in discussion with local voluntary agencies to continue providing disabled children's access to childcare.

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?**

<b>2</b>
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Day-to-day management of the centre is good; the organisation runs smoothly. Governance arrangements are less clear. The role of the two governing bodies is not sufficiently well defined, raising the issues of purpose and effectiveness. The advisory board is new and is only just beginning to exercise its influence. It has an overview over all ten children's centres in Swale. However, what its ultimate role will be in relation to the strategic management of individual centres has yet to be clarified. At a more local level there is a steering group. It is predominantly a discussion forum, which, in some respects, duplicates the work of the advisory board although with a partially different membership.

Actual strategic power and accountability lie with the link officer working closely with the centre manager. The two also work in consultation with staff and the parents' forum. Within this group as a whole, there is good understanding of the needs of the area and the extent to which the centre is meeting them. Data are well used and self-evaluation and the identification of clear targets are good even if some documentation does not do justice to this. For instance, in the action plan, targets are not precise enough, target groups are not defined clearly, and the centre's planned activities are not linked with sufficient clarity to the needs of target groups.

Resources are well used. All staff are deeply conscious of current financial restraints. The joint working of the centre with St Mary's Children's Centre is but one example of this. Overall, the centre offers good value for money.

Equality is promoted well. All that the centre does is aimed at encouraging greater equality. Reference has already been made to the help given to families with disabilities to ensure that they are able to enjoy life and play a full part in society. The new initiative with Gypsies and Travellers and also the support given to east Europeans has a similar intent. 'Little Voices' provides a good service for bilingual speakers who are directed to language and other services as required. Imagery around the centre reflects the different ethnicities found in the United Kingdom and there are specific events, such as Black History week. Two other examples aimed at ensuring that identified groups are not excluded are the '20 Something' group for parents aged 20 to 29 and the 'Twins Come and Play' group. A minibus service helps parents and carers to access the centre.



The centre works well with partner agencies. Together, they address the needs of vulnerable families and safeguard children. In the centre itself, adults and children are safe. Staff have completed safeguarding and first aid training and there is rigorous risk assessment. There is rigorous Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checking and the centre has recently introduced a single central register, which it is in the process of completing by including all centre staff, volunteers and others who work at the centre regularly.

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>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes</b>	<b>2</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>2</b>

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

The March 2009 Ofsted report on Rainbow Pre-School.

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## Summary for centre users

We inspected the Bysing Wood Children's Centre on 28 and 29 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall. We met and spoke with many of you and we thank you for your help when speaking to us. We have taken your views into account.

We are very pleased with the wide range of services which are provided for you and we could easily see how they are helping adults and children at the centre to have better opportunities in life. Families with difficulties are supported with care and sensitivity by a whole range of professional staff with different specialisms. At the centre, there is good security and all staff who work there and in outreach centres have been security checked.

We are pleased with the wide range of your achievements which result from your own good efforts and the help you have received. The way your self-confidence improves is striking. Some of you become volunteers and some of you use your learning and experience to find jobs. We like the NVQ programme linked primarily to childcare. Links with partner organisations such as Jobcentre Plus and the voluntary sector are good. We are also very pleased with the fact that children learn basic skills which will help them greatly in school and in other aspects of their lives in the future.

We were impressed with the important role that parents and carers play in running the centre. We are pleased to see that the parents' forum works very effectively and that other groups such as the 'Dads' Forum' contribute helpful ideas on the way the centre operates and what it might do in the future.

The people who lead the centre are good at their job. They know what works well and what doesn't and have good ideas about what to do in the future. They work well with the local authority and this helps the centre do well. We think some of the documents the managers use for planning and development could be a little more helpful and we have some queries about the role and effectiveness of the new advisory board and the steering group but this does not affect our overall view that the leadership and management of the centre are good and that improvement in the future will be good.

Thank you again for your help and my best wishes for the future.

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