

Inspection report for The Bingley Children's Centre

Local authority	Wolverhampton
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Reporting inspector	Debora Barazetti-Scott HMI

Centre leader	Jayne Jackson
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Norfolk Road Wolverhampton WV3 0JE
Telephone number	01902 312026
Fax number	01902 424896
Email address	j.jackson@merridale-pri.lppplus.net

Linked school if applicable	Merridale Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Salisbury St Day Nursery EY279797

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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Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leaders, the headteacher of Merridale Primary School, the chair of the school governing body, the chair and members of the advisory board, front-line staff, representatives of partner organisations including health, education and social care, and families and volunteers who use the centre.

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

Information about the centre

The Bingley Children's centre is a phase two centre that has been fully operational since 2008. The centre is managed by, and accountable to Merridale School governing body, and meets its core purpose, commissioning day care from Salisbury Street Day Nursery. The nursery was inspected by Ofsted in July 2010.

The children's centre's reach area includes nine super output areas, five of which are in the top quintile of overall deprivation. The estimated number of children aged 0–5 within the reach area is 903. Of these, 65% live in homes within areas of high deprivation. In the reach area as a whole, 95 lone parents with children under 5 are claiming income support, but the centre does not have data on what proportion of adults with children under 5 are job seekers or claiming incapacity benefit.

The reach area is one of the most diverse in Wolverhampton. Sixty-two per cent of those in the reach area are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The majority of these define their ethnicity as Asian British/Asian Indian or Pakistani. There is also a steadily growing Eastern European community within the reach area.

In 2010 62.9% of the children in the reach area achieved 78 points at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children's centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for families

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre's capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

2

Main findings

The Bingley Children's Centre is a good centre. It successfully reaches the majority of families in its area, including those most in need of intervention and support. Activities within the centre are extremely well attended. The centre is welcoming and friendly and staff are professional and knowledgeable. They have access to a range of development opportunities and have a variety of skills and knowledge, including minority languages. Parents are very positive about the support they receive from the centre, and a number stated that they were keen to 'give something back'. The centre collects the views of service users in a variety of ways. It is responsive to requests made, whether through questionnaires, surveys, or the comments book which is available in the activity rooms for parents to record their comments and get a written response. Examples of the centre adapting to meet the needs of parents include the delivery of an additional 'Stay and Play' afternoon session and providing a meeting venue with refreshments for those attending both morning and afternoon activities.

The centre knows its area and the population of service users very well. A range of data is collected which assists the centre in understanding the numbers of families with particular needs, such as those for whom English is a second language, lone parents, and children from workless households. The centre attracts a high number of families from these groups to its planned activities and also undertakes individual family support work where required. There are plans in place to engage a greater number of service users from specific areas where there is known to be high deprivation and a consultation exercise has been commissioned to assist with understanding those needs. The centre leader, staff, and the governing body are highly committed to improving outcomes for children, and have developed a range of systems to measure impact and outcome, including before and after questionnaires for carers and staff for group work. A method of measuring outcomes for individual work is in development, but not yet fully rolled out.

The centre has a development plan for the year, with targets set by the local authority, governing body, and the centre itself. It is reviewed on an ongoing basis, and the governors and advisory board receive regular reports on progress. Targets

set for the year are likely to be met or exceeded, however, the priorities set out in the development plan do not reflect fully the areas of development required to meet responsibilities to all the vulnerable groups within the reach area. Ongoing self-evaluation is robust, although senior managers accept that the strategic vision is not focused fully enough on outcomes and is not sufficiently well embedded in delivery plans. The centre leader has only recently come into post, but the staff group is stable and well supported by an effective senior leadership team within the centre. Overall, the centre demonstrates good capacity to improve.

The engagement of health and education partners at a local level has enabled the successful delivery of a range of services, especially ante- and postnatal programmes, breastfeeding and early educational planning. Family learning is strongly encouraged through well-planned structured activities in 'Stay and Play' sessions, as well as physical and musical programmes. These universal services encourage families to develop a relationship with centre staff and to access other services.

Many parents have engaged in learning programmes within the centre, such as the regular and successful programme which supports parents in understanding their children's emotional development. Parents are signposted to adult education or employment services, but the proportions, and particularly those most in need of support within the reach area, are not high enough to promote better than satisfactory economic well-being overall. The targeted information and advice available to these vulnerable parents about employment and training are given by children's centre staff. There is also a noticeboard which is regularly updated with current vacancies. Adult education services are not delivered in the centre and there is no direct input from the Jobcentre. The centre and its partners are not able to demonstrate the impact of activities in relation to the transition to work or further study.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should support improvements in partnership working by strengthening links with adult education services and services offering support for those seeking employment in order to deliver services which enable vulnerable families to improve education and employment outcomes.
- The governing body in conjunction with senior leaders should review priorities and establish more specific, measurable, and challenging outcome targets which enable the centre to demonstrate its impact on families most in need of support.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Parents and carers benefit from the centre's good relationships with local health partners. Services held within the centre and within the reach area have a high level

of engagement. Breastfeeding is successfully promoted and the rate of breastfeeding at 6–8 weeks has increased year on year, now standing at 42% which is slightly lower than the national average. This healthy start in life is reflected in obesity rates, which are a third lower in the reach area than in Wolverhampton and lower than the West Midlands and England averages.

The centre provides a range of health-related activities including healthy eating and snacks at all sessions, as well as a food health advisor running a range of fun food-related sessions for family learning. Commissioned services such as 'Leaps and Bounds' encourage physical activity, and the centre is well equipped for safe and exciting outdoor play. Children with speech and language delay benefit from early intervention strategies and tailored therapy, with a specialist delivering one-to-one activities in the home. One parent commented that attending signing classes and 'rhythm time' with her daughter had hugely improved her communication skills and, therefore, her social development.

The centre demonstrates strong links with children's social care. The centre has worked with nearly all of the children subject to child protection plans within the reach area in the last year, and individual family support work meets the needs of those who are vulnerable and require early intervention. Good outcomes are apparent. Family support workers are trained to undertake lead roles as part of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), and as part of an authority-wide early intervention strategy, the centre is developing Common Assessment Framework processes with all families who receive individual support.

In conjunction with other agencies, the centre provides home-safety advice and equipment where appropriate, and there is good take-up of this, supporting children's safety in the home. One parent, for example, commented that advice given had helped to make her more aware of possible hazards in her home. The centre itself is a safe and child-friendly environment. Families say that they feel safe and secure at the centre and are very confident in sharing any concerns with staff.

Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage in Wolverhampton is lower than England and the West Midlands averages overall. However, it is higher within the children's centre's reach area than any other area in the city with 62.9% achieving 78 points in 2010. Between 2009 and 2010 this has risen from 26.5%. There has been no improvement in narrowing the gap for the lowest-achieving 20%, which has remained static at 33%. It is something of an achievement that this gap has not widened as more children have achieved the required levels. There is a city-wide target to address these learning outcomes and the centre is strongly focused on delivering services which enrich skills and improve communication through a structured family learning environment. Activity planning is thorough and dedicated towards skills enrichment and communication. Individual learning journals demonstrate good individual progress.

Outcomes from feedback are regularly published on the centre's noticeboard, and the advisory board has good parent representation including families from minority

ethnic groups.

For parents who are engaged in children's centre activities, both informal and more structured learning, there is a high level of satisfaction and good anecdotal and written evidence of effective outcomes for families. These include improved confidence in parents' own skills and abilities in managing their children's behaviour, keeping them safe and healthy and helping them to learn. The centre accounts for the numbers of families it refers for further education and training programmes but is not currently able to report comprehensively on the outcomes of these.

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	3

How good is the provision?

2

There is strong evidence of a good level of engagement of the vulnerable groups within the reach area, both in individual work and universal provision. There is a geographical area within the reach which has a low level of attendees and the centre has developed plans to expand its services to ensure these families benefit from the centre's provision more fully. Case reviews demonstrate effective partnership working with agencies such as those dealing with domestic abuse, adult mental health, housing and substance misuse. These relationships help to support families in crisis and enable them to develop a safer environment for their children and to adopt effective parenting skills. Staff are committed and knowledgeable, and parents comment extremely positively on the support they receive. One parent who spoke to inspectors commented that, whereas she had previously needed parenting advice and support, through the help she received she now felt able to give help and advice to others.

Carefully planned and structured sessions at the centre ensure that universal provision, as well as individual sessions, support learning activities for children and families. Children attend sessions with fathers, mothers and grandparents. One father commented, 'The centre is a lovely place to come, rhythm time has really

helped my child with social interaction.’ Children and parents who speak English as an additional language are supported in their language development through the use of interpreters, staff who speak a range of languages, and speech therapy services.

Support, advice and guidance are tailored effectively to the needs of families accessing universal services. Staff engage relevant agencies to support families and, as well as signposting, they help with the engagement process and ensure that both parties understand what is needed to ensure successful outcomes.

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 centre’s partnership with the local authority and the governance arrangements with the school are good, but the strategic aims of the centre are not understood well enough at different levels. Despite the good links with partner agencies at an operational level, including statutory, third sector and independent organisations, not all the relevant agencies, particularly Jobcentre and adult education services, are fully integrated strategically. This affects the ability of the centre to accurately review, evaluate and develop the effectiveness of its provision for families in receipt of means-tested benefits and those directed toward employment, education and training.

During the previous year, the changes in management have had some effect on the centre’s ability to lead the team to develop and deliver fully ambitious targets, but day-to-day operational management is of a high quality. Staff are clear in their respective roles and responsibilities and have complementary skills. The centre is sustainable and it provides good value for money both in the services provided and for the numbers of children who benefit. The Bingley Children’s Centre is widely used by other agencies and also delivers activities in community settings and this encourages the development of trusting relationships with families.

The centre has a safeguarding policy and staff are clear about what to do if they have concerns about a child. Staff receive relevant training, including safeguarding at different levels, and the centre is now developing an overview system to check that induction programmes and staff training are appropriate. There is a single central register to record that staff have been checked for their suitability to work with children, and there is a system for ensuring that other agencies working in or on the premises have also been checked for their suitability. Staff have a very good

understanding of risk and vulnerability and provide good support for families individually. Safeguarding processes are well embedded and the centre works very effectively with safeguarding agencies to ensure good outcomes for vulnerable children and they know when and how to refer families appropriately when necessary.

Equality and diversity are celebrated well, with a variety of resources which reflect different cultures, as well as examples of a wide range of healthy food being offered. Parents from a range of backgrounds stated that they feel welcomed at the centre and families from minority ethnic groups are well represented, including on the advisory board.

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

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

Merridale Primary School was inspected in 2011 and judged to be outstanding. Salisbury Street Nursery was inspected in 2010 and judged to be good.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the The Bingley Children's Centre on 22–23 February 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

The Bingley is a good children's centre, providing a friendly and welcoming environment for all children and families in the community. We enjoyed speaking to so many parents, and seeing you and your children enjoying yourselves at the centre's activities, especially 'Stay and Play' and 'Rhythm Time'. You told us how well the centre listens to you and that the staff are approachable and helpful. As a result, the centre cares for you and meets your needs well. You told us you feel safe when using the centre, and we judged the centre to have good procedures and systems to keep you and your children safe. There are lots of ways the centre helps you to keep your children healthy, such as outdoor play, lovely healthy food and snacks, and sessions like 'Leaps and Bounds'. Lots of you told us how support for breastfeeding, parenting programmes and just having someone to talk to have improved your relationships with your children and your skills in managing sometimes difficult behaviour. We also heard from you that the centre listens to suggestions you make about how you might like things to change and develop, but explain to you when this is not always possible. The work the centre does is of good quality and supports the learning and development of your children well.

It was good to hear that so many of you are keen to be involved in the decisions the centre makes, and we hope more of you will be able to do this in the future. We found that those involved with running the centre are keen to make it the best it can be. To help and support improvement, we have made some recommendations. First, we have asked the local authority to help the centre to work more closely with other professionals to make sure that all the services in your local area are able to offer what is needed to support your own learning and training needs. Secondly, we have asked the centre's leaders and managers to ensure through focused services that the centre is more strongly focused on meeting the needs of the most vulnerable children and families in your community.

Please accept our thanks for the time you have taken to tell us about your experiences of The Bingley Children's Centre. This was a very important part of our inspection and we could not have done it without you.

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