

Inspection report for Galton Valley Sure Start Children's Centre

Local authority	Sandwell
Inspection number	383445
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Galton Valley Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Bright Lights Day Care

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 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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of Sandwell Borough Council, members of the governing body and parents' forum, a broad range of users and a number of partners, including health professionals and social care workers. They observed sessions at the centre and looked at the centre's work and a range of documentation.

Information about the centre

Galton Valley Children's Centre is a phase one centre located in a purpose-built building in North Smethwick, serving a complex geographical area separated by a busy main road. It is situated close to Galton Valley Primary School which also provides childcare for children aged three months to five years.

The population of Smethwick is ethnically diverse. Most families are of Bangladeshi, Pakistani or Indian heritage and there are increasing numbers of asylum seekers. The centre serves an area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage with the majority of neighbourhoods within the 20% most deprived in England. High numbers of children live in families in receipt of benefits and/or where parents are not in work. Within the area, there are significant issues surrounding unemployment and a high proportion of families for whom English is their second language.

Governance of the centre is provided by the headteacher and governing body of Galton Valley Primary School and by the local authority. There is also a parents' forum and an advisory board. A range of health, social care, family support and

education services are provided at the centre and from other outreach accommodation across the area.

Sessions for children and parents are provided through a range of activities at the centre including 'Stay and Play'. Crèche facilities are provided for the children of parents attending parent-focused sessions. Childcare provision is delivered at the school from 8am until 6pm for 48 weeks of the year. Most children enter childcare and early years education with skills and knowledge lower than those expected for their age.

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

Galton Valley Children's Centre provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for all its users. They value the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. One parent described the views of many and said, 'The support I have received from the staff at the centre has helped me through a time of crisis and is giving me confidence to tackle the problems I am facing. I no longer feel alienated.'

A key strength of the centre is the culture that the centre manager has created where centre staff work well together as a team and are motivated to continue improving the work of the centre. Safeguarding policies and procedures meet legal requirements and underpin good practice. However, health and safety risk assessments lack sufficient detail on potential hazards, such as the poor state of the adjacent car park. Users' views are heard through the centre's effective work with the parents' forum and through an independently commissioned user survey. The centre provides a wide range of stimulating activities that contribute to improving the lives of families in the area.

A good knowledge of the needs of this multi-cultural community, and dialogue with users in the community, have enabled the centre to secure improvements. Over the last year, the centre has increased the number of registered users, particularly targeting those groups whose circumstances have made them hard to engage with, to 91%. This has resulted in the centre being considered a hub of the community by

many users and services.

The strength and impact of the centre's provision have increased through effective collaboration with other professionals and the positive use of information from course evaluations and data. The centre's capacity to improve is good as a result of ongoing improvements and the good outcomes for families. Self-evaluation and data are used effectively to identify the centre's priorities and families' needs. The local authority provides a clear framework of information which enables the centre to act quickly and respond to the needs of different groups in its reach area. Parents and children benefit from the good range of services which promote healthy lifestyles and keeping children safe.

Maternity support workers and trained volunteers provide effective support for breastfeeding mothers. Through this support, and that provided by the midwives and health visitors, the number of mothers initiating breastfeeding is improving, but almost half do not sustain this. Data from the primary care trust and local knowledge show that there are groups and areas where the initiation of breastfeeding is low.

The arrangements for referrals to Jobcentre to provide users with routes to employment are good. Increasing numbers of parents are participating in adult learning through practical activities, sewing classes, and specific programmes for promoting parenting skills, which support entry into learning by developing confidence and concentration. Several adults have achieved qualifications and progressed into volunteering and employment. Good support for teenage parents is provided.

The centre is an inclusive setting and promotes equality well by providing services that meet the needs of all users. Particularly strong actions are taken to support those families and children who are made vulnerable by their circumstances. The centre assesses the individual needs of children and their parents particularly well. Specific activities are offered on Saturdays monthly to provide opportunities for fathers to play with their children. There are no formal observations of staff delivering teaching and learning, to provide developmental feedback and to support their continuing development.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work with the primary care trust in areas where the initiation of breastfeeding is low:
 - to improve provision of information and support for mothers, before they give birth, on the long-term health benefits of breastfeeding
 - to increase the number of mothers who initiate and sustain breastfeeding.
- Improve the knowledge of staff on carrying out and recording the outcomes of risk assessments to continue to provide a safe environment for children and

their families.

- Engage with the appropriate local authority department to ensure the site is better maintained to protect the health and safety of children and families attending the centre.
- Implement an observation system to ensure teaching and learning are effective in meeting the needs of users.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Increasing numbers of users access the services provided by the centre, and take-up rates are good. All groups that attend the centre across the area, from a variety of backgrounds, work harmoniously together. The centre addresses users' feelings of isolation effectively and provides good opportunities for families to engage in a range of services and develop strong friendships. A typical view is, 'I now have a circle of friends and we help each other.' Users report that their confidence and self-esteem have improved since attending the centre.

Children are well prepared for nursery and mainstream school, some from low starting points, due to the effective emphasis on early learning. Children enjoy learning and form positive relationships with parents and other children. The centre has made good progress towards narrowing the achievement gap with rates improving significantly in 2011. The mental health outcomes for potentially vulnerable families, including those with children with additional needs and those whose children are subject to child protection plans or who are in the care of the local authority, are particularly good.

Parents report that they have developed a better understanding of early years education through good-quality learning organised by the centre in many of its outreach settings. Case studies and discussions with parents and carers provide strong evidence that having access to programmes on strengthening families helps parents and carers form relationships and trust others. This enables them to improve their children's communication skills, learning and behaviour. They are able to discuss child development with professionals and each other and feel more confident in speaking with school staff.

Effective partnership-working between health professionals and family support workers results in positive outcomes for new mothers. 'Bumps and Babies' and 'Infant Massage' sessions contribute towards early attachment and bonding with their babies. Immunisation rates are high. While centre staff support mothers who are breastfeeding, there is insufficient information provided through the primary care trust to encourage more mothers to breastfeed. 'Cook and Eat' activities, with a clear focus on safety, take place with parents feeling more confident and developing their understanding of healthy eating. One parent said, 'The courses have helped and I now use fresh ingredients to cook food. My children eat vegetables and really like carrots.' These programmes are supporting the centre's drive to tackle some high

rates of obesity in school-age children. Safety in the home is well supported with practical help, and road-safety sessions have been run by the community support officers. Specialist services for promoting language and communication and behavioural management sessions are providing parents with skills to support their children more effectively.

All services offered in the centre effectively help to keep users safe. The centre's good-quality relationships with families and their children allow staff to identify any concerns within families and intervene appropriately. Staff use their range of language skills to support those for whom English is their second language. Play sessions successfully engage parents by involving them in the running of the groups and in developing more formal volunteering opportunities. Parents contribute to the evaluation of the activities delivered by the centre both through the parents' forum and one-to-one discussions.

Users benefit from the strong partnerships with other service professionals providing access to relevant information and guidance, including housing, benefits advice and debt management. The centre has good links with local training providers who offer English and mathematics courses and job-related training. As a result, some users develop good and relevant skills to prepare them for work, improving their life chances.

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

Staff understand thoroughly users' needs as a result of sensitive personal contact and good partnerships with health care professionals and with local schools. The assessment of individual cases is robust, and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used successfully to ensure teams can be assembled quickly to support children and families when needs are identified. Support provided by the centre staff

and other professionals is valued by those whose safety may be at risk as a result of domestic violence and others who, for a variety of reasons, are isolated and for those who have experienced acute trauma in their lives.

All interventions are child centred. Staff have a strong focus on supporting families in the best interests of children. Outreach activities are delivered in a range of settings across the area to ensure that families have access to services. Learning, development and enjoyment are supported through inclusive and supportive strategies to support all learners as well as a range of activities, such as 'Stay and Play' and outdoor learning experiences arising from the centre's participation in the 'Forest Schools' initiative. The centre has a good outdoor play area with many elements to stimulate learning, shared with the childcare provision. Sessions for fathers are held monthly for those who are unable to attend sessions through the week. The centre's qualified teacher is working with all settings in the reach area to support the development of staff to improve the learning experiences and achievements of children. However, the centre does not carry out developmental lesson observations of staff in order to improve practice.

Feedback from local schools includes comments on the higher levels of confidence and abilities of children who have accessed learning and development activities through the centre. Transition arrangements for children moving on to school are managed effectively. Staff use assessment tools to record the development of children to ensure they all make appropriate gains in their learning. Sensitive, individualised and tailored support is provided for all families and children who access the centre. Staff provide additional support for families who have hospital appointments, or by representing them in meetings with housing services and helping them to complete official documents.

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

Leaders and managers at all levels have a clear view of the provision and know where improvements should be made. The local authority provides effective governance and strategic leadership, and the centre's development plan reflects local and national priorities. Evaluation and target-setting are well constructed using a good range of tools. All sessions are well planned and reviewed, and future planning is influenced by parents' evaluations.

Leaders set an ethos within the centre where safeguarding is a high priority. All legal requirements are met and Criminal Records Bureau checks have been carried out for all staff and volunteers. Guidance is provided to staff through a good range of policies and procedures. All staff and volunteers receive regular update training on safeguarding and feel confident in their knowledge of how to raise any concerns. Health and safety risk assessments are satisfactory. Routine checks in the centre and of visits to local attractions lack specific information on issues and remedial actions. However, the car park is not routinely checked and parents had raised concerns regarding the amount of litter on the verges. The car park is in the ownership of the local authority and the centre has a record of the reports it has made to them and to the local councillor. Safe recruitment is managed through the local authority's human resource management policies and procedures. Regular and effective supervision supports the personal and professional development of staff well.

Resources, including a wide range of good-quality play equipment, toys and books, are used effectively to encourage learning and development. There is also access to a good range of accommodation across the wider reach area through schools, community centres and churches which provide opportunities for those who would otherwise be unable to access services. Outcomes for families are good and the centre is offering good value for money.

The centre promotes equality and diversity well through its services. The centre staff provide good support on a range of issues for the users. Inclusion of all groups and respect for them is reflected in the culture, ethos and the practice of the centre. The number of families attending the centre is consistently high and the achievements of children are good. Users are treated with respect and staff increasingly use the experiences of parents from different cultures in learning.

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	2

meet its core purpose	
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

Findings from the inspection were shared with the inspection team for the primary school.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Galton Valley Sure Start Children's Centre on 1–2 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We talked with many of you, your children, staff and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents. Thank you for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to talk to us about your centre. Your views were very helpful to the inspection. Many of you told us that staff are friendly, welcoming and supportive and this has had a truly great impact in improving your lives.

The main job of a children's centre is to ensure that all the services for children and families work together in your best interests. Your centre does this well, working together with partners, such as health professionals and other organisations, particularly to bring support to you close to where you live. Some of you told us that you would like to have access to more information to prepare you better for the birth of your children and that you had concerns regarding the litter in the car park. We have asked the centre to discuss with health professionals and the local authority how to improve these particular aspects.

Some of you told us that taking part in the centre's activities has given you the opportunity to make new friends, which has made an amazing difference to your lives. You have been given the opportunity to learn new skills, to access debt, benefit and housing advice and to develop your confidence, which has transformed your lives. Particularly helpful for many of you has been the support provided through programmes on developing your parenting skills, to support you to continue breastfeeding, and to help you understand how to ensure the safety of your children.

Many of you have started to improve your future employment prospects by taking short courses. In order to continue working to these high standards, we have asked

the centre to carry out some formal observations of teaching and learning on staff. The centre is safe and easily accessible where you feel listened to and respected. It offers a good range of services in response to your needs. The centre, overall, is run well and managed effectively.

We saw how much you and your children enjoy the activities in all the locations in which you meet, including the opportunities to play, learn and have fun together. We found that the work of the centre in supporting children to develop their communication and language skills is good, especially in their knowledge of letters, sounds and early writing skills. Local headteachers commented how well you and your children were doing when starting school and they would like these developments to continue.

Your honest and frank opinions have helped us immensely during the inspection. We enjoyed meeting you and sharing your joy of learning and hearing about how you have improved the lives of your children. We wish you and your families well for the future.

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