

Inspection report for Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford Children's Centre

Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	383381
Inspection dates	7– 8 March 2012
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

Centre leader	Vicky Keirle
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Banwell Youth and Community Centre West Street Banwell North Somerset BS29 6DB
Telephone number	01934 426774
Fax number	Not available
Email address	vicky.keirle@n-somerset.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100080.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

No.100080

© Crown copyright 2012



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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the centre's governing body, the local authority and the senior management and leadership teams. Employees of partnership agencies linking with, and visiting, the centre were consulted. Inspectors also spoke with centre staff and families using the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

Information about the centre

Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford Children's Centre is one of eight children's centres within the North Locality of North Somerset. The centre is of phase two status; it was designated as a local authority run children's centre in February 2008, and opened its doors and began offering the full core offer of services in October 2008. The centre operates on a part-time, two and a half days per week, basis. Governance arrangements include a partnership group and various partnerships with other community groups. Within its full core offer, and through its various partnerships across a mostly rural reach area, the centre provides early intervention support for families in greatest need and services such as health, maternity, early years education and family support, some on an outreach basis. In doing so, it serves as a hub for the local community.

Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford Children's Centre serves the five rural villages of Banwell, Sandford, Winscombe, Bleadon and parts of Churchill and the surrounding area. Together they form a mixed community but with a relatively advantaged level of social and economic disadvantage overall, as seen for example, in the lower-than-average number of families with low incomes and requiring benefits. Two areas, including the area adjacent to the centre, have much higher levels of disadvantage and are between the average and most disadvantaged 25% of areas across the

country. Overall, approximately 18% of the children under five are members of families who depend on workless benefits.

Currently, the children’s centre’s reach area accommodates 400 children under the age of five years. However, given the rural nature of the area and the small size of some of North Somerset’s children’s centres, it is common for a number of families to access services and to receive support from more than one centre. Children’s skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are mostly above those expected for their age, but in the two most disadvantaged areas, children’s skills at this stage are lower than those normally expected. The area served by the children’s centre is made up predominantly of families of White British heritage. There is a small, but increasing, proportion of families from minority ethnic backgrounds and/or who speak English as an additional language.

The children’s centre offers its services from the Banwell Youth and Community Centre. The children’s centre’s premises comprise a porch area, a main reception, shared office, kitchen, large playroom, smaller playroom and outside play area. The building is shared with the youth service. Other partner services, for example, health teams and the local school, also make use of the premises on the days when the centre’s own activities are not operating. From time to time, the children’s centre also provides outreach events at a few community venues within its reach area, for example at Bleadon Community Hall. Alongside a range of partners, such as extended school services, the centre provides a number of activities within a comprehensive range of holiday events and clubs.

Over the past two years there have been a number of changes to the staff team. The centre manager, who also manages another centre, is supported by the local authority’s Assistant Locality Leader for early years.

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

Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford is a good children’s centre. Despite its small size and operating part time, good collaboration with other centres and local authority

and health agencies ensures that families with young children are supported well. Improved sharing of data, more recently of new births in the centre's area, continues to rapidly increase the number of children and families supported by its services. For example, of the 22 new births registered in the centre's area during the period August 2011 to December 2011, 14 children are engaging with the Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford's services and three others are attending other centres. This shows that over three quarters of the new children in the area are being assisted. In addition, the centre can also show that close to 60% of the families with young children in its most disadvantaged and targeted area is now being supported.

Staff place a high focus on keeping children and their families safe and ensure that all safeguarding procedures are followed effectively. Staff work well with education partners, such as specialist Springboard staff, to meet the needs of disabled children and those with special educational needs. Staff are also diligent in liaising with partner agencies, especially health and social teams, to ensure that the Common Assessment Framework is implemented well to support children at risk. As a result, parents have confidence in staff and, with their children, feel safe at the centre.

Overall, health and educational outcomes for children and their parents across the centre's area are above the local authority and national averages and continue to improve. For example, the percentage of obese children in the Reception years is below average and continues to fall and there is an increasing and above average proportion of mothers breastfeeding.

Educational outcomes are similarly positive, as seen, for example, by the gap in performance between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers being narrowed from 43.2% in 2010 to 24.3% in 2011. The positive reduction of nearly 19% is better than that found nationally. It also shows how parents and carers too are being enabled to contribute more effectively to their children's speaking and listening skills. This improvement also reflects the centre's inclusive support of the below average proportion of families from minority ethnic backgrounds in its area. Even though outcomes for adult employment and take-up of entitled benefits compare positively with national figures, the centre's role in preparing parents for further training or employment is not fully developed.

The centre's co-ordinator and other staff work well with the partnership group to manage and improve provision effectively. Good and improving outcomes for families and the increasing support given to those in greatest need demonstrate the centre's good capacity to sustain further improvement. The centre's good self-evaluation is underpinned by information from, and that shared with, other agencies and includes evaluations completed by parents at the end of sessions. While these are used well to improve services, the lack of, for example a specific parents' group constrains parents' involvement in shaping the centre's services.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the involvement of parents in the governance of the children's centre by for example establishing a specific parents' and carers' group, such as a Parent Development Board or Parents' Forum.
- Develop the services provided to improve parents' confidence and readiness to access education and employment.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Most families using the centre's services appreciate the welcome they receive from caring staff, which lifts their confidence and helps them to feel safe. Procedures for safeguarding children are good, involve accurate implementation of the Common Assessment Framework and also support looked after children well. Although the centre currently has no children subject to a child protection plan, records show that procedures have been effectively implemented when needed. Good links with health, schools and social care teams also protect those considered most vulnerable. Specific guidance to parents on how to stay safe at home, including within all parenting sessions, also keeps children safe.

Good health outcomes across the centre's area are a particularly positive feature and reflect strong links with health teams. Data collected across the local authority are used well to evaluate the impact of services. For example, five of the six families accessing funded childcare are enlisted with the centre and four are also receiving family support. In addition, over the past 18 months, of the 57 children and 44 parents attending Friday Stay and Play sessions over 40% of those attending came from the most disadvantaged community within the centre's area. Those attending also included all the targeted lone parents and almost half the fathers who attend services in the centre's area, further showing positive engagement with some of the most vulnerable families.

Good health outcomes also reflect the friendly sharing of ideas between young mothers themselves. For example, discussions about healthy eating and breastfeeding are reducing the small number of obese children in the area (6%) and continuing breastfeeding by the high (92%) of mothers initially breastfeeding their babies.

The occurrence of teenage pregnancy and smoking during and after pregnancy in the centre's area remains low. The number of families experiencing domestic violence and/or alcohol and drugs abuse and of children's admissions to hospital also remains well below local authority averages. Even so, centre staff and specialist partners are tackling a small increase in domestic violence and hospital admissions effectively through home visiting and parenting support.

Children make good progress from their varying starting points, especially those who need more intervention and are in receipt of supported childcare. This was seen, for example, during the childminders' network meeting where 30 three- to four-year-old children greatly enjoyed and benefited from the messy, physical play. Children made and talked about patterns in foam, made marks on walls and poured sand through sieves and sand wheels. These activities promoted the children's early writing and problem-solving skills effectively and also ensured a good start in personal and language development. Currently 63.5% of children in the centre's area achieve 78 points, an increase showing above average attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Parents make good progress as they learn alongside their children, enriching their own communication skills and ability to support children's development. Parents and carers also grow in self-confidence, as for example during the 'Baby Daze' activity, which parents call, 'a life-saver group because it gets you out and lets you ask the questions you want to ask'.

Some adults use centre services and information to access advice on benefits, training and employment opportunities, improving their economic stability. A few parents at the centre. Centre staff, aided by the volunteer coordinator, have trained one volunteer who is about to start at the centre. Parent members of the partnership board contribute well to the governance of the centre and the majority of other parents complete helpful evaluations of the sessions they attend. Parents, including from minority ethnic groups and those considered vulnerable, willingly offer their ideas, which, for example, have led to improved fencing of the outdoor area to keep children safe.

The centre supports fathers, lone parents and parents of disabled children and those who have special educational needs effectively. Family support workers liaise regularly with midwives and other members of health and social care teams and undertake helpful home visits to parents who have difficulty attending the centre. Good links with mental health professionals and social teams also ensure that families with mental health needs are well supported.

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	3

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

Centre staff and staff from partner organisations provide good levels of support and ensure that the range of services provided meet the needs of the majority of parents and their children well. Typical parents' comments include, 'There's always someone there to talk to if you need to' and 'I can see that my child is so content whenever he comes here'.

'Stay and Play for Young Parents' and 'New Beginnings for parents and babies' encourage friendships and raise the emotional well-being of families. Children also have good opportunities to enjoy active play in safe indoor and outdoor locations. For example, happy bright-eyed babies crawl purposefully on soft cushions to make contact with adults, much to the joy of all parents and staff present. At times, centre activities take place at other venues. The good variety of activities offered during holiday times, such as the popular 'Bear Hunt' and 'Bedtime Story Sessions', are well attended and also promote enjoyment and extend parenting skills and children's physical and personal development.

All of the good numbers of children and parents attending the centre, including disabled children and those who have special educational needs, benefit from a safe and well-resourced learning environment. The support given to individual families and during small group activities, especially for young mothers, is of good quality. The part-time nature of the centre's provision is enriched through strong partnership working, which also involves signposting families to other children's centres and childcare providers across North Somerset. However, links with Jobcentre Plus are not as effective as other partnerships because most interviews take place at other venues and not at this centre.

All staff, including speech therapists, family support and childcare specialists, are well trained and share their expertise to good effect with other practitioners. Sharing good practice was also evident, for example, during the 'Tiger Tots Childminder Group' meeting where eight practitioners meet together to enrich children's play and learning opportunities and to share ideas about how to further extend children's good achievements.

Health staff work closely with parents to make sure that services meet their needs. The local surgery's use of the centre's premises to provide baby clinics on days when the centre would otherwise be closed is particularly well supported. This is because they are accessibly located, offer high quality health care and advice and are well staffed and include the local general practitioner. These sessions are very effective alongside the centre's other activities in promoting parenting skills and safe practice at home. Health teams, especially midwives, also work closely and share information

with centre staff to support families considered vulnerable, for example those experiencing domestic violence or affected by hospital admissions.

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 capable centre coordinator, aided by the skilled Assistant Locality Leader and advisory board members, directly hold the centre to account for its work. Governance is good, but leaders are aware of the need to involve more parents in developing the work of the centre. Managers work well as a team and collaborate effectively with a range of partners from other agencies. Together, they have increased the amount of information collected about the community's needs and are using this well to adapt services. By this means, effective self-evaluation supports good development planning and regular staff training. This enables the centre to support the most vulnerable families effectively, including almost all of the few families who have experienced domestic violence.

Good child protection procedures and effective staff training safeguard the children's welfare. These include secure systems to ensure that all staff at the centre and visiting specialist staff are accurately vetted. Strong multi-agency working also ensures that early intervention through home visits and guidance to parents about home safety, for example, helps in keeping children safe.

Good partnerships with Early Years Foundation Stage practitioners and schools promote children's good achievement. In particular, effective links with Banwell Primary School, including with the parent support advisor, continue to narrow the gap in performance between the lowest achieving 20% of children and their peers in this disadvantaged part of the centre's reach area. Good links with Springboard, speech therapists and other specialists ensure effective support for children's differing needs, including for disabled children and those who have special educational needs. Strong partnerships with health professionals also sustain good levels of support and further secure equal and inclusive practice for all.

Good links with partners ensure that the premises are used well. The centre's own resources are also managed and used well to promote children's good progress and development. As a result and particularly given its part-time designation, the centre provides good value for money.

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

This inspection took account of data on the children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage across the range of primary schools in the area served by the children's centre.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaining about inspections*, which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected the Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford Children's Centre on 7 and 8 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall. We would like to thank you for allowing us to join with you during some of your sessions and for sparing the time to talk with us about the centre and its activities.

Banwell, Winscombe and Sandford Children's Centre is a much improved centre that continues to improve. Although this centre only operates on a part-time basis, we

found that strong links with other services, especially health teams, are enabling staff to engage well with those families who need help the most. Inspection shows that the children's centre coordinator, with support from the Assistant Locality Leader for early years, works skilfully and with determination to identify and respond to your needs at an early stage. As a result, data show good outcomes for children and families across the area served by the centre. For example, there is a high uptake of mothers breastfeeding, and childhood obesity is lower than average and reducing.

During the inspection, we talked with parents and staff, and with partners and members of the local authority working with the centre. You told us that staff frequently gather your suggestions and ideas and are skilled at using these to make sure the centre's services meet your needs. You also told us that when this is not possible due to limited resources, staff do not delay in signposting you to other centres or agencies who can do so. As a result, quite a few of you attend sessions in more than one centre.

In addition, you told us how friendly and supportive everyone is, and how happy and secure you and your children are when using 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 'Stay and Play Young Parents' Group' sessions each Monday. All of you we spoke to told us how you appreciated the advice given by staff. You told us about how much you gained, not least raised confidence, from being able to meet and talk with other parents facing the same challenges during the 'New Beginnings Parent and Baby Group' each Tuesday. We greatly enjoyed observing some of these sessions and others such as Baby Daze and the Childminders' Network Group. During these sessions, the relaxed sharing of ideas and indoor/outdoor messy and physical play were much enjoyed by children and their parents. We were also pleased to see several fathers attending this session, and noted the success of the dads' rugby day jointly held with Winscombe Rugby Club.

Clearly the centre has made a big difference in many children's and families lives, especially those facing challenges that make life difficult. We could see the popularity of activities where you could play with your children and help them learn, such as in the 'Bedtime Story by Candlelight' and 'Bedtime Story with Father Christmas' events. Some of you told us, and have also informed staff, that these sessions really spurred you into reading more books at home with your children and that this is helping to get them ready for school. Records of children's improving skills on entry to school and of their good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage also reflect this early enjoyment of reading stories.

Some parents we spoke to told us how they had been helped to make appointments with Jobcentre Plus on being made redundant from work and that they felt very welcomed on arrival and very safe during their time at the centre. One parent typically reflected the views of others by saying, 'The children's centre has been a lifeline, local for me so I can meet other parents in a place where friendly staff make me feel safe.' Other parents observed, and inspection shows, that staff implement consistently good procedures to safeguard children's and parents' welfare when

using the centre. Inspection also shows that the centre works well with health, social and other local authority agencies to provide timely and valuable support for parents in need, which also helps to keep children safe at home.

We note that parents on the partnership board contribute well to the governance of the centre. However, the centre has identified, and we agree, that not enough parents are involved in the formal governance of the centre. Therefore, the first aspect that we identify for improvement is that the centre should, for example set up a specific parents' group so that more of you can contribute to the development of the centre.

Even though unemployment is relatively low in the centre's area, as in other areas it is increasing, and so our second area for improvement is that the centre should work more closely with Jobcentre Plus and other services to provide help for parents in preparing for employment.

Thank you again for your help.

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