

Inspection report for Frankley Plus Children's Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
Inspection number	383500
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
Reporting inspector	Steve Nelson

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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Holly Hill Methodist CofE Infant and Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Alphabets Nursery and Holly Hill Nursery

The inspection of this Sure Start children's centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

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

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

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, the local authority, the children's centre manager and members of the governing body. They met with a number of representatives of services who work through the children's centre, including health visitors and the outreach workers. Inspectors spoke to groups of parents. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation, including the centre's self-evaluation, development plan, user evaluations and case study information.

Information about the centre

Frankley Plus Children's Centre is a phase one centre that provides full core purpose provision. It operates in the Longbridge ward from one site and is based on the same site as Holly Hill CofE Infant and Nursery School.

The centre manager is responsible for the day-to-day running of the centre. The governing body of the school oversees the centre's work and the advisory board acts as a steering group. The advisory board consists of representatives from partner organisations and key stakeholders that work with the children's centre, the local authority and parents.

The majority of the families who use the centre are from White British backgrounds. A growing number of families using the centre are of mixed White and Black Caribbean origin. Data for the reach area place the user base in the bottom 10% to 30% nationally for deprivation. The children's centre has 526 children under five in its reach area. About 54% of children and adults who use the centre come from

homes that are dependent on benefits and where no one is in work. When they start early years provision, the majority of children have skills, knowledge and abilities that are below those expected for their age.

The range of activities offered by the centre includes support at the local community baby clinic, antenatal birth clinic, breastfeeding support and baby massage. The centre has links with health visitors, community midwives and speech therapists. It signposts families to a range of providers that offer adult education, volunteering opportunities, and activities designed to support parents back into employment and training. The centre opens 50 weeks each year on weekdays from 7.30am until 6pm.

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 centre manager conveys a strong sense of purpose and direction. She demonstrates effective organisational and communication skills, valuing the work of everyone. Consequently, on a day-to-day basis, activities run smoothly. Good outcomes for children and families are underpinned by effective provision. The quality of care, guidance and support offered to all families is excellent. Highly skilled and experienced staff work in a sensitive and person-centred way to identify and respond to the individual needs of families.

Parents feel comfortable in the centre and know they will get a warm welcome from the staff. One user expressed a view that was typical of many others: 'The staff go the extra mile. They make you feel really at ease.'

Outstanding prioritisation of safeguarding ensures all children and families are safe. Parents using the centre have an excellent understanding of how to ensure the safety of their families. The quality and range of services offered meet the needs of the very large majority of the users in the reach area well. Overall, learning and development are good. However, the centre does not provide enough opportunities to involve fathers in their children's learning.

The centre staff have a clear sense of drive and passion, and a good understanding

of the difficulties families face in the area they serve. Partnerships with the local community and other agencies are effective in securing good outcomes. Nevertheless, the centre's work with midwifery is not sufficiently developed to deliver a fully integrated breastfeeding service.

The advisory board provides effective supervision and support for leaders and managers to improve provision. Accurate self-evaluation identifies the key priorities for improvement. The centre's engagement with users accessing the centre's good-quality provision is excellent.

The centre's capacity to sustain improvement is good overall. Managers and staff form a committed team that is determined to improve provision and extend services to the wider community. They are focused on improving areas of weakness and gaps in provision and outcomes. The strong teamwork of staff and high levels of commitment by all stakeholders contribute effectively to improved outcomes for users. The local authority and advisory board support developments well and have good systems to monitor outcomes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Increase the proportion of mothers continuing to breastfeed at six to eight weeks by working more closely with midwifery to promote the benefits of breastfeeding
- Provide more opportunities for fathers to play and learn with their children by extending activities for them.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Health outcomes for families are good. Data supplied by the centre show that, although below average, increasing numbers of mothers, including those from targeted groups, are continuing to breastfeed. Obesity rates are lower than average for the area. The weekly playgroup sessions for children and their parents encourage physical activity at the centre and home. The smoking cessation group has seen half the clients give up smoking. This is having a beneficial impact on their families. A client said, 'My home is smoke free now which benefits my daughters' health.' Families benefit from effective integrated services to promote their well-being, such as those vulnerable families referred for early intervention.

Early Years Foundation Stage data from local schools in the area indicate that children make good progress from their starting points in developing the skills that will help them in the future. The centre has taken effective action to reduce the achievement gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the rest. Activities offered by the centre are popular. A parent attending the 'Messy Play' sessions said, 'My son really enjoys attending, he gets the chance to do messy activities that we can't do at home.' Surveys show that families particularly enjoy the holiday activity programme with 204 children accessing the facilities.

Families using the centre make good progress in developing their skills, including parental skills, and demonstrate improvement in their educational and personal development.

Parents say they are very safe at home because of the increased awareness of safety that the centre has given them. One hundred and thirty five homes have been made safer through the excellent range of home equipment, including cupboard locks, socket covers and fireguards provided by the centre. Adults are confident to approach the centre with concerns about community issues. They have been supported very well to share the information with the police on the centre's site. Case studies show significant impact and improved outcomes for children on child protection plans and looked after children. Very effective working with partner agencies ensures that families who may be at risk of harm and children assessed under the Common Assessment Framework are closely monitored and kept safe.

Families in workless households are very appreciative of the financial advice and guidance provided by the centre. Information on Child and Working Tax Credits is effective in improving their economic well-being. Increasing numbers of parents are completing literacy and numeracy courses provided by the Frankley Learning Group. A parent commented, 'I have started doing the numeracy course to enable me to gain a qualification, so I can get a job to support my family.' The centre has helped place 19 children with local childminders to assist their parents' return to work. Adults engaged in the Next Steps work-focused employment initiative acquire an appropriate range of job-preparation skills.

The centre has established its role in the community. Thirty-two families helped produce the decorative features within the centre and the playground. Children's behaviour is good and they form positive relationships with each other. They are able to influence the environment in which they play because sessions offer good levels of child-led play. Parents are increasing their influence and shaping services offered by the centre. For example, six adults are completing a NVQ in childcare as a result of their requests for the centre to provide a course. A number of parents have progressed into volunteer work as a result of initiatives carried out by the centre.

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	1
The extent to which all children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2

The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	2
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How good is the provision?

2

The centre works effectively with other agencies to ensure assessments, such as those carried out for disabled children and those who have special educational needs, are robust and well informed. The use of the Common Assessment Framework is well established and effective in highlighting users who are at risk and in need of support. Families gain access to a range of focused services through these services. A parent who attended a parenting course, which included behaviour management techniques, said, 'I have realised that my behaviour affects my child's behaviour.' The variety of services and activities provides fun and learning opportunities. The 'Toddler Time' sessions at Frankley Community Library are popular. One parent commented: 'My child loves it. She is more interested in reading books and she sings a lot at home.' However, services do not provide enough activities to involve fathers in their children's learning.

Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage at the centre is good. Children are provided with a good range of activities and learning opportunities from birth that supports their development effectively. Staff make good use of assessments of children's achievements to plan the next steps in learning. High-quality resources that are age-appropriate and interesting encourage children's engagement. The centre promotes purposeful learning well. For example, a grandparent attending one of the cooking courses said, 'My grandson is much more involved in cooking at home, he talks about what he has cooked and uses numbers in weighing food.'

Adults were very keen to speak about the high-quality care and support that they receive from the centre. The open-door policy provides a listening ear to support children and families all year round. The centre's highly effective specialist support services have helped 47 vulnerable families in the last year. This highly successful intervention has raised parents' awareness of their children's needs and removed barriers to bonding effectively. The centre has been particularly successful at supporting families to understand their rights to housing as a result of homelessness or overcrowding. Support is offered in an enabling manner so that families do not become dependent.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear. The advisory board and local authority provide effective supervision of the centre's activities. Links between strategic planning and service provision are effective. Effective performance monitoring systems assure the work of the centre staff and partners. Morale is high and belief in the centre's success is evident at all levels. Self-evaluation generally accurately identifies the centre's strengths and weaknesses. There is a good-quality development plan which identifies clear improvement targets. Evaluation has resulted in changes to the provision that meets the needs of families effectively.

Highly effective prioritisation of safeguarding ensures all users are safe. The Criminal Records Bureau checks are very well maintained and accurate. Robust procedures are in place with regard to suitability checks for new workers. Thorough risk assessments are completed prior to all activities. Very effective multi-agency working ensures children and adults are fully protected and safeguarded. Robust procedures and referral mechanisms ensure that concerns are followed up and support, where needed, is offered. The centre's staff are trained very well in safeguarding, and for dealing with domestic violence and for working with children or adults with disabilities. This extends to all volunteers who are required to complete a safeguarding qualification.

The centre's actions to promote greater equality for different groups are good in removing barriers, and effective for disabled children and families and those who have special educational needs. The ethnic breakdown of users is representative of the local area.

Outreach services are highly effective in engaging with the families in the area. They have been very successful in engaging targeted groups such as lone parents and teenage parents. Relationships between key partners are effective in securing good outcomes. However, the centre's partnership working with midwives is not yet developed to ensure a fully integrated delivery of breastfeeding services. Resources are well managed so that good-quality services are consistently engaging and improving outcomes for families. This represents good value for money.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional	2
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supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are clear and understood	
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	1
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	1

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

The inspection of the Alphabets Nursery.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Frankley Plus Children's Centre on 14–15 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We are very grateful to all the parents and representatives from the centre and the professional partners who took the time to come and tell us about the work the centre does. You gave us a positive picture of the centre, and what you said was very useful to us in making our final judgements.

Good leadership provided by the centre's managers, coordinated teamwork of the centre's staff and its professional relationship with partners are at the core of the centre's work. Workers at the centre communicate well with each other and their feedback provides a good knowledge and understanding of the community's needs. Staff and other adults consistently give the highest priority to safeguarding.

Those of you who use the centre have an excellent understanding of how to keep your families safe. We know this because you told us of what you had learnt. We agree that the centre is very welcoming. The centre is excellent at working closely with other agencies, such as the health service and social services, particularly to help children and families who need extra help and support.

Many of you engage with the centre and enjoy the good range of activities it provides. Some of you are keen to attend classes to improve your skills. These must be enjoyable because we noticed that there is regular attendance on these courses. Good-quality sessions are organised for you to improve your parenting skills and for your children to develop the basic skills they need for the next stage in their learning. As a result, you gain more confidence and expertise, and your children are prepared well to start early education.

We have found two areas that require improvement and the centre's managers are already aware of these. We are recommending that the centre's managers increase opportunities for fathers to learn and play with their children. We are also asking managers to work more closely with midwives to promote the benefits of breastfeeding.

We wish you every success for the future.

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