

Inspection report for Broken Cross Children's Centre

Local authority	Cheshire East
Inspection number	383396
Inspection dates	14–15 March 2012
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school	111223 Broken Cross Community School
Linked early years and childcare,	Not applicable

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Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

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

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

An inspection of the co-located 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 the centre manager, members of staff and professionals from other partner agencies. Discussions were held with members of the advisory board, parents and representatives from the local authority. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Broken Cross Children's Centre is located on the outskirts of Macclesfield in East Cheshire. It is a phase two children's centre, which was designated in February 2008, and began delivering the full core offer in February 2009. It serves a diverse community. Areas of social housing immediately adjacent to the centre are in the 20% and 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country; however, there are also a number of affluent and rural areas within the locale. The children's centre adjoins Broken Cross Community School. It operates from a single building and offers some services at other venues in the locality. The centre's core purpose is provided through a range of integrated services that include health, family support and outreach work.

Broken Cross Children's Centre is a local authority run centre. The Family Service Manager has responsibility for a small staff team and the day-to-day running of the centre. She is line managed by the Locality Manager and supported by an advisory board.

Statistics show that within the centre’s reach area the Index of Multiple Deprivation range is from 18.85%-98.38%. A very small minority of children aged under five in the area live in workless households. Most families in the area are of White British heritage and there are a few families from a number of minority ethnic groups. There are eight primary schools within the centre’s reach area and children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with varied skill levels. Of the 1190 children aged under five in the centre’s reach area, 927 are registered with the centre. Of these 42% (391) are from the most disadvantaged areas.

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

Broken Cross Children’s Centre is a good centre. Families using the centre benefit from a wide range of cohesive and well-integrated services that are delivered through good partnership working with a number of agencies and organisations. This popular centre is an integral part of provision for children and families in the locality. The centre has a highly cohesive, enthusiastic and dedicated staff team who work well together to improve the lives of families within the reach area. Users speak very positively about the services provided by the centre and their experience of the support offered. Parents who use the centre are encouraged to let the staff know what services they would like. For example, parents say what groups they would be interested in and they are confident that their wishes will be responded to. However, parents are not sufficiently engaged in the decision making and governance of the centre.

Health and safety outcomes are improving for most children and families and are good. New and prospective mothers benefit from a full range of services which effectively promote their health and well-being. The promotion of physical activity through ‘Healthy walks’, healthy eating sessions and the development of the centre’s allotment area are all contributing to families adopting more healthy lifestyles. Children and users report that they feel safe in the centre. This reflects the high priority given to the promotion of safety and the robust safeguarding arrangements. The site is safe, attractively furnished, a robust risk assessment is completed, and all staff and volunteers are subject to appropriate vetting and recruitment checks.

Children make good progress in their speech and language due to the specialist support and the focus given to this aspect of development by the centre. Children engage in a variety of activities, they have fun, play together and learn new skills. Parents who access learning provision have improved and learnt new skills and had a beneficial time in the process. However, opportunities for parents to engage in adult learning, leading to employment, are underdeveloped. A small minority of lone parents gain employment and go on to further training through the support of the Jobcentre adviser.

Central to the work of the centre is the provision of good quality care and guidance for children and their families. The centre meets the emotional needs of users well because staff regularly provide highly individualised support. Users say they feel listened to, that staff are very sensitive to their needs and highly responsive at times of crisis. Assessment of need and appropriate target-setting ensure that most families, particularly those whose circumstances make them vulnerable, benefit from a range of good quality services. The centre promotes purposeful learning well and the achievements of children and families are regularly celebrated.

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. Effective performance management arrangements are in place and staff have a high level of expertise supported by good levels of continuous professional development. Self-evaluation is accurate and informed by families and key partners. However, current development plans lack rigour, have insufficient measurable targets and they are not monitored systematically. Following the reorganisation of Cheshire East Family Service, changes have been put in place for the 2012–2013 planning process. The centre works closely with partners and through locality working to maximise the use of available resources to meet the needs of families. The centre's inclusive approach ensures that families from different backgrounds feel welcome and are able to enjoy the wide range of provision on offer. Parental satisfaction surveys show that the vast majority of parents are very satisfied with provision. There is a clear understanding of the centre's strengths and where further improvement is still required. As a result, the centre's overall effectiveness and capacity to improve are good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure the centre's planning sets out ambitious and measurable targets for development against which the impact of the centre's work can be monitored and evaluated.
- Increase the level of parental involvement in the decision-making process and governance of the centre.
- Further develop provision to enhance economic well-being by improving the uptake of adult learning which can lead to further education or employment.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Extremely effective partnerships with health professionals ensure parents are provided with information and invaluable support in relation to health and well-being. These include breastfeeding and weaning, speech and language and parenting. As a result, users are developing good outcomes in relation to health. The promotion of healthy lifestyles threads through every activity in the centre. For example, the establishment of an allotment on part of the site enables families to learn how to grow their own vegetables and there are healthy snacks available for groups. Outcomes for families with additional emotional needs are improving well, and engagement with all groups is high. Breastfeeding rates at initiation and continuation show an upward trend and the numbers of pregnant women smoking at full-term are falling by 1.5% year-on-year.

Parents feel safe and consider their children to be safe when using the centre. Staff develop very trusting relationships with children and their families and staff know them very well. Consequently, the early identification and prevention of potential risks play a key role in reducing harm to children. There is significant and sustained evidence of improved outcomes for children subject to a child protection plan and use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is an integral part of the centre's work with families. Highly effective parenting programmes have a marked impact on outcomes for users experiencing difficulties with managing children's behaviour. As one parent said, 'I am a much better parent now than I have ever been'. Supporting victims who are subjected to domestic violence or abuse has a high priority and joint working is beginning to have an impact. Children of families where domestic violence occurs who attend the 'Jigsaw' support group demonstrate improved behaviour and are less anxious.

Parents and children enjoy opportunities to work and play together at the centre. Children learn new skills and develop confidence through the range of learning opportunities and experiences they are involved in. Adults show improvement in their educational and personal development, they gain in confidence and are better able to access information. The parenting and short courses offered by the centre are much valued by parents. 'Tiny Tots', 'Stay and Play' and the support of the speech and language therapist enhance children's language and literacy skills well through stimulating play and the use of positive speech and language techniques.

A small number of volunteers help out in the centre and some groups, such as the 'Cherubs Breastfeeding Group' and 'Macclesfield Multiples', a group for families who have multiple births, are run by volunteers. Children demonstrate positive behaviour and all centre users treat each other with respect. Parents know that their comments are listened to and several improvements have come about as a result of their suggestions. A few parents attend 'Parent Voice' meetings where they offer their views on what happens at the centre. Two parents are members of the advisory board, of which one is the Chair. However, parents are not actively engaged in the planning of services and strategic decision making of the centre. The lone parent adviser from the Jobcentre has had a significant impact on the economic

well-being of some lone parents. The majority of those that have used the service have either gone on to employment, further training or have had their benefit entitlement checked, and in some cases increased. A minority of families using the centre enjoy a broad range of learning opportunities and are developing confidence and acquiring skills for the future. The centre provides very few adult learning opportunities that are accredited and could lead to further education or employment.

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

The centre provides a good and effective range of integrated services. Staff know the families, the community and service providers well. They use their own expertise and skills and those of their partners to make informed and accurate assessments of the individual needs of users. This knowledge enables them to plan and deliver services based on individual need. This is particularly effective for those children and families in need of targeted support. Parents comment positively on the dedication of staff and one said, 'I would not be here now if it was not for the staff at the centre and I do not know where my kids would be.' This comment reflects the views of many. Teenage and lone parents, disabled children and male carers are well catered for by a range of good provision offered across the locality by the centre and its partners. While the centre recognises that there is still more to do to fully engage some members of the community, the considerable improvement made is testament to the quality of the provision offered.

Activities are of a good quality. They are designed around planned outcomes and in sessions such as 'Messy Talk', 'Tuning into Sounds' and 'Stay and Play', children are happy, relaxed, engaged and learning. Parents increase in self-confidence and improve their skills and knowledge through parenting programmes, a range of taster sessions and short courses on topics such as DIY, photography and cooking.

There is a strong emphasis on providing effective emotional support to boost users' confidence and raise their self-esteem. This has a significant impact on improving the lives

of families, particularly those whose circumstances have made them more vulnerable. The CAF is used effectively to support families in times of difficulty and crisis. They are enabled to access timely, good quality, care, guidance and support to meet their needs.

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 is an integral part of provision in the community and parents and partners speak positively about the difference it makes to children and families. Managers are committed to continuing improvement and have effectively focused efforts on priorities for further improvement. However, currently these priorities are not clearly reflected in the centre’s planning documents or defined in an easily measurable way. The advisory board is committed to improving outcomes for children and families. Although there is some parental involvement, only a few formally contribute to important decision making. ‘Parent Voice’, which provides an opportunity for parents to contribute their views on the centre, is not well attended and does not actively contribute to the planning and overall evaluation of provision. Professional supervision of staff and regular one-to-one meetings with managers promote a culture of shared values and enable staff to meet organisational expectations. Teamwork among staff is excellent and morale is high.

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and are becoming more firmly embedded following the reorganisation of the centre in 2011. Strong partnerships exist with a range of statutory, voluntary and faith-based organisations. The partnership with health is particularly strong and is having a real impact on health improvements for families. Partnerships with Jobcentre, a social housing provider, leisure services, library services and local faith groups enhance the contribution made to meeting the wide range of needs in the local area. The move to locality working has enabled resources to be used more efficiently. Partners contribute a broad skills base which provides opportunities for a more targeted response to need and the ability to offer a diverse range of provision. There is good uptake of provision, particularly from those families whose circumstances have made them vulnerable. The centre provides good value for money as outcomes for the majority of families living in the reach area are good and improving.

The inclusion of all children and their families is central to the work of the centre. Staff are sensitive to the needs of those who use its services and respond accordingly. Parents of disabled children are well supported at the ‘Little Stars’ group and practical help is provided for those parents with poor language or literacy skills. Diversity is actively celebrated and

provision is differentiated well to meet individual and group needs. The centre itself is a highly cohesive community where positive relationships flourish.

Good safeguarding arrangements ensure that children are protected effectively. The staff have a strong commitment to safeguarding users including children and adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure checks are completed to ensure that all staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. Required qualifications are kept up to date through refresher training courses. Children’s safety and well-being are enhanced by the rigorous and consistent implementation of robust policies, procedures and practice. Centre staff play an active part in Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) which are a key part of the safeguarding process in the area. Regular meetings and effective communication between centre staff and partner agencies mean that families who may be at risk of harm, and children assessed under the CAF are closely monitored. Staff have a sensitive approach to the variety of needs the centre’s users present, which ensures that families feel comfortable with staff and are very well protected. Security procedures and the attentiveness of staff mean that children are kept very safe on site.

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 secures improvement in outcomes	3
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

Findings from the concurrent inspection of the primary school have contributed to the centre report and judgements.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Broken Cross Children's Centre on 14 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who met with us during the inspection, agreed to let us sit in on your groups, or spoke to us about the centre. We were very grateful for your help with the inspection and interested to hear your views.

Many of you went out of your way to tell us how important the centre is to you, what a difference it has made to you, and how much you enjoy the activities provided. The different agencies supporting you work extremely well together and are committed to making sure that your children get the best possible start in life. You told us how the centre is making a positive difference to your lives and those of your children. We found that the centre is supporting you in many ways and helping you to keep your children safe from harm and to be healthy. You told us how friendly and approachable everyone is and how happy your children are, and we agree with you.

The centre is very effective in supporting you, especially at times of crisis. We know that you are asked frequently for your views on the activities and that many of you have already made suggestions about what you would like the centre to offer. We would like the centre to involve even more of you in making decisions on how the centre is run.

Some of you have taken part in training that the centre has run and you were able to tell us about the parenting skills you have learnt and what you know about DIY and healthy eating. A few of you felt you would like more opportunities to learn and we have asked the centre to put on more training that could help you to get a job or go on to further education.

The senior staff do a good job in the way they run the centre. They have created a bright, clean, well-resourced environment where all are welcome. They know what the priorities are for the work of the centre and we have asked that they make them clearer in the annual plan so that they can effectively measure the difference they are making.

Thank you very much for your welcome and willingness to speak to the inspectors. We thoroughly enjoyed talking with you and sampling the centre's work. We wish you every success in the future.

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