

Inspection report for BELLAMY Children's Centre (Lindhurst & Berry Hill wards)

Local authority	Nottinghamshire
Inspection number	383871
Inspection dates	21–22 March 2012
Reporting inspector	Alison Veall HMI

Centre leader	Susan Kent
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	St Peter's Primary School and Nursery URN 132242 Berry Hill Primary School and Nursery URN 133265
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Butterflies Day Nursery EY219334

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.

Report published: April 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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, parents, partner agencies and local authority senior managers.

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

Information about the centre

Bellamy Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre. It was designated in April 2008. The centre is situated in the heart of a residential housing estate and was extended from the original community centre. The centre's services are mainly delivered from the centre site but some are delivered from St Peter's and Berry Hill Primary and Nursery Schools, Butterflies Day Nursery, the local health centre, Bellamy YMCA and local community venues.

The strategic management and governance of the centre is the responsibility of Nottinghamshire County Council Children, Families and Cultural Service. Bellamy Children's Centre works in close partnership with Oak Tree Children's Centre. The centre coordinator manages both centres and staff work across the two centres. Support and guidance is provided by the Local Advisory Group which consists of managers, staff, representatives from partner agencies and parents.

The most recent estimates indicate there are approximately 522 children under five years living in the Bellamy area with 109 classed as living in the most deprived area. The children's centre area is economically diverse. Parts of it are listed as being in the 10% most deprived areas and comprise mostly of social housing and privately rented accommodation whilst others areas comprise of privately owned accommodation and represent a much improved economic status.

The majority of families are of White British heritage with 52 children from minority ethnic groups which are predominantly of Eastern European heritage. Five per cent of children live in workless households. Most children enter the centre’s childcare and play provision with skills, knowledge and abilities which are much lower than that 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

Bellamy Children’s Centre has successfully established itself as a focal point and the hub of the community. In a little over a year the percentage of families consistently accessing services has risen from an average of 11% to 77.9% for targeted services and to 64% for its universal services. The range of services ensures there are activities available for all within the reach area. The centre has a clear understanding of the remaining few families who are not yet accessing services. The considerable rise in engagement is as a result of the combined knowledge and drive of the current manager, who was appointed fourteen months ago, the vision of a strong leadership team and the commitment and determination of staff to improve the lives of children and families.

Parents access outstanding levels of care, guidance and support. ‘I couldn’t have managed without the support of staff.’ ‘They provide a service for the whole family.’ ‘They never judge.’ ‘I was at the end and they came to my rescue.’ These were views expressed by users to demonstrate how much the centre has made a difference to their lives, particularly when circumstances make them vulnerable. A vast array of easily accessible information gives advice, for example, on smoking cessation, breastfeeding, sexual health and services and activities within the wider community.

Safeguarding is given exceptionally high priority. The comprehensive policies and procedures are used rigorously by the centre to protect both families and staff. Staff are diligent in ensuring all safeguarding procedures are followed, including the use of the Common Assessment Framework. Strong interagency working, particularly with colleagues in social care, and cohesive systems enable families to be identified quickly and given high levels of support. A wealth of information in the centre

supports parents' understanding of their responsibility to safeguard themselves and their children.

The support, guidance and signposting to a range of agencies are empowering parents to deal effectively with a range of issues. They told inspectors how their self-esteem and confidence was improving so much and they wanted to give something back to the centre. Parents do this in a variety of ways; through volunteering, becoming members of the outcome groups or the parents' forum and through membership of the local advisory group. Their growing confidence has enabled them to very effectively challenge the centre to improve services further.

The outstanding collaboration and cooperation with other agencies include children's social care, counselling services, parenting support services, speech and language specialists, family and community learning, Bellamy YMCA. Local schools and other professionals ensure that expertise is available for every type of need. Support is extremely effective and, as a result, provides the best possible solutions to improve outcomes for parents and their children. Well-attended 'Stay and Play', 'Belly-Me-Babies' sessions, which are supported by very effective monitoring systems, along with a range of parenting courses, are just part of the rich variety of services which are having a positive impact on users' lives. Through all of these activities, personal development and achievement are celebrated well.

The senior management team, including the district lead for children's centres, uses all available data to measure the impact that services are having on the lives of families. These data, including case studies, identify that for a large majority outcomes are at least good and improving. However the local authorities' setting of measurable targets is still in its infancy and has yet to be fully embedded. In addition the health authority is not providing sufficient focused data in relation to health outcomes and emergency hospital admissions. Despite the above, the impact that the centre has had in a short period of time, plus its unfailing enthusiasm for further development explain why the centre has good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the quality and impact of provision by:
 - ensuring the Primary Care Trust provides the centre with relevant key performance indicator data regarding emergency hospital admissions, to enable the centre to more effectively monitor the impact of its provision
 - working with the local authority to embed measurable targets into the centre's improvement plan success criteria so that the centre can more easily demonstrate the long term impact of its services
 - improving the engagement and participation of the remaining few families within the most hard-to reach groups, particularly fathers.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The emotional health and well-being of children and families is improving as a result of the high levels of attention they receive from centre staff and partner agencies. Poor mental health as a result of low employment opportunities, relationship breakdowns and personal crises affects a number of adults and children. For some the counselling service has provided them with the opportunity to deal with issues in a reflective and supportive manner. As a result, they are making improvements and self-esteem and confidence are improving. As one parent said 'This centre has helped me so much, I am a completely different person.' Breastfeeding rates within the centre's reach area are higher than other areas in the district. A good percentage of babies continue to receive some breast milk at six to eight weeks. Effective support is provided to expectant and new parents to promote good outcomes for their families. Parents and children are developing a good understanding of how to live healthily through comprehensive advice on weaning and immunisations given at antenatal and health visitor clinics. Parents report that their diets have improved as a result of their attendance at the workshops on fussy feeding, healthy lunchboxes and cooking on a budget. The centre is contributing significantly to the district's reduction in obesity level for reception aged children which currently stands at 9.4%, which is 0.5% below national rates.

Parents report that they feel safe and consider their children to be safe whilst attending the centre. Parents are developing a good understanding of their role in ensuring the safety of their children through attendance at parenting programmes, involvement in activities that take place during child safety week and through taking notice of the safety displays within the centre. Families who may be experiencing domestic violence are supported well and they receive a wealth of information and timely advice on who to access for support and intervention. Children who are subject to a child protection plan are exceptionally well safeguarded through the consistent implementation of clear protocols and outstanding safeguarding arrangements. On-going intervention work has ensured that no child within the area is subjected to a child protection plan for a second time.

Children, including those with a disability or special educational needs, make good progress from their often low starting points in developing their skills for the future. In 2011, 63.4% of children within the centre's area achieved at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. The centre ensures a strong focus on the areas of development where children are achieving less well. Parents are learning how to support their children at home and are developing their understanding of how to promote their child's learning, development and positive behaviour. Very effective transition arrangements are in place which ensures smooth transition into school. The most vulnerable two-year-olds are making good progress as they access early education and childcare through the centre's significant uptake of the government funded two-year entitlement. The gap between the outcomes for the children most at risk of not achieving and others is a fluctuating picture but as a result of very effective tracking, the centre has excellent information on the reasons for this. Adults are making good progress in the development of their confidence,

skills and knowledge as a result of the wide range of vocational, non-vocational and accredited training opportunities. Some parents having undertaken the centre's 'softer' informal learning opportunities, felt confident to pursue accredited qualifications and to become volunteers.

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	1
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

The children's centre is bright, welcoming and accessible. The café area is a hub of activity where parents and staff mingle when waiting for appointments, attending meetings and groups or just popping in. Children enthusiastically play and explore in the indoor and outdoor environment and photographs evidence how much they enjoy the interesting and challenging provision. The centre provides a wide range of well-integrated services. Excellent partnership working between all agencies in the Enjoy and Achieve Outcome group is ensuring a consistent approach to the delivery of play and learning opportunities. In addition, targeted interventions such as 'Toddler Talk' and 'Home Talk' are improving children's communication language and literacy and personal social and emotional development.

Staff know the families, the community and service providers very well. They have an excellent understanding of the Common Assessment Framework which they regularly share with colleagues and which forms the basis of highly effective outreach work. As a result, assessment of need is determined through use of this process and as a consequence, it is consistent and thorough without being burdensome for families. The information gained from assessment enables staff to plan and deliver services based on individual need. This is particularly effective for those children and families in need of targeted support. Staff are passionate about making a difference and give excellent levels of care, guidance and support. At times of crisis, families feel strongly supported.

Excellent partnership working has successfully raised parents' aspirations and

provided good opportunities for them to develop their skills and knowledge. One parent said that volunteering at the centre had enabled her to regain the confidence she had lost whilst being at home with her children. Another said how her improved knowledge helped her to support her children and how their confidence and social skills were improving.

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

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels and outstanding in relation to safeguarding, partnerships with other agencies and equality and diversity. Staff who are led by a visionary and determined manager are passionate about the centre and its community. Senior leaders have a clear vision, set the tone, communicate high expectations and are determined to ensure that the centre is effective in improving the life chances of all users. Resources are used creatively in order to deliver the best possible service. This centre provides good value for money. Self-evaluation is broadly accurate. This and the improvement plan are of good quality with clearly identified tasks and success criteria. The local authority supports and challenges the centre through its annual conversation. However, the use of measurable targets set against measures of success is still in its infancy and is yet to be fully embedded. The local advisory group consists of parents and representatives from partner agencies who very effectively challenge the progress made by the centre.

Each staff member is committed to the centre's work and understands how they contribute to its effectiveness. A recent centre reorganisation has resulted in staff becoming 'guardians' of a particular outcome area. This practice is mirrored through the implementation of outcome groups, with representatives from a range of agencies and parents who focus their monitoring on an area, such as being healthy or staying safe. This change in practice has ensured that the most appropriate skills and knowledge are being put to best use. Administrative staff know the importance of a warm welcome and use their skills to ensure all visitors to the centre feel valued and secure from the moment they make contact.

Inclusion of all children and families is central to the centre's work. This is evidenced by the growth in the number of families who consistently use the centre's services and particularly those from target groups within the community. The centre recognises that it has work still to do with some of its hard-to-engage families and

fathers, a percentage of which remain the most transient group within the community. Effective signposting is used to support the very small minority of families who speak English as an additional language. The centre celebrates diversity through a wide range of resources which reflect different faiths, cultures and backgrounds and it openly and transparently challenges and deals with inappropriate comments or prejudice. Case studies and discussions with parents attending the 'Colligo' group evidence that parents of children with disabilities or learning difficulties have been supported very effectively by the centre. The centre's outstanding and highly effective partnerships are having a major impact on the work of the centre and its ability to improve the lives of families within the area. Its excellent work within the community and its links to Bellamy Stakeholders group is having a significant impact on improving community cohesion and raising the profile of the Bellamy area.

Safeguarding is given a high priority. Staff and partners are extremely conscientious and wholly committed to early intervention work, undertaking it in a sensitive manner with children's safety and well-being at the heart of all they do. Safer recruitment procedures are followed well and all relevant checks are made to ensure that all staff are suitable to work with children. All staff undertake relevant child protection training which exceeds the requirements. Risks are thoroughly assessed and minimised. Good professional supervision and management arrangements are in place to monitor the performance of staff and ensure their safety, well-being and on-going professional development.

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	1
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	1
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

The inspectors considered the judgements made for the Early Years Foundation Stage for St Peter's and Berry Hill Primary and Nursery Schools and Butterflies Day Nursery.

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 Bellamy Children's Centre (Lindhurst & Berry Hill wards) on 21– 22 March 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to those who came to speak to us and to those of you who were willing for us to visit you in your own homes. It was clear to see that the children's centre is a valuable part of your community and it plays a vital role in supporting you and your families. Parents and representatives from various agencies referred to it as 'the hub of the community' and we agree. We found it a very busy and welcoming place. The staff put their hearts into the work of the centre and, supported by the strong leadership of the centre manager and the senior leadership team, they provide you with a range of high quality services that are tailored to meet your individual needs. You told inspectors how much you trust and respect the staff and how helpful they are. 'I couldn't have managed without the support of staff.' 'They provide a service for the whole family.' 'They never judge.' 'I was at the end and they came to my rescue.' These are typical of the some of the comments made by you about the centre and its staff which demonstrate how valuable you consider it to be.

We were impressed by progress the centre has made in increasing the numbers of families who visit the centre and take part in a wide range of activities on a regular basis. So that more families benefit from the services offered, we have asked the centre to make contact with and provide for families and fathers who do not currently attend. Excellent partnership arrangements between the centre, health professionals, education, social care and community and voluntary agencies make things better for you. They all work together and help you improve your lives. The centre uses data to monitor how well they are doing and to plan for the future. However, health data are not specific enough to help them in this so we have asked health colleagues to ensure that the data accurately reflects your community area. In addition, the local authority is responsible for setting the centre targets and monitoring the effectiveness of its work. We have asked them to improve this so that they can more easily measure the impact the centre is having on the lives of you and your families.

The centre is a calm and friendly and place and one which delivers outstanding care, guidance and support especially when your circumstances are challenging. They provide you with a great deal of information particularly around the health and well-being of you and your family. We were impressed by the information about services and activities within the community and the guidance provided to help you to help your children to play and learn. We could see how in times of crisis the centre offers you excellent support and guides you when you are trying to make very difficult decisions.

The manner in which you challenge the centre, either through your activity evaluations, your comments to the centre staff, your contributions to the parents' forum and the outcome groups and your comments to the local advisory group, demonstrates your growing confidence. Your determination to ensure that the provision meets your family's needs and is as good as it can be is clearly evident. We were able to see that wherever possible the centre changes its priorities as your needs change to ensure that the services delivered are still the most appropriate ones for you. As a result of this, a large majority of you say you are satisfied with the services you receive and are glad that you came to the centre.

The centre places a high priority on encouraging you and your children to learn new skills and this is helping you all to develop in confidence. Children clearly enjoy the activities in the 'Stay and Play', 'Baby Massage' and 'Belly-Me-Babies'. A wide range of activities including 'Toddler Talk', 'The Creche' and the 'Ready to Learn' transition group are supporting the good progress children are making in their learning. As a consequence, they are better prepared for the next stage in their learning than those who do not come to the centre. In addition to enhancing children's development, we saw that the centre is helping you to improve your skills and knowledge by supporting your attendance at a range of training and development events. It was good to hear that some of you are volunteers at the centre and that you are confident enough to run groups or to volunteer at community events such as the big lunch. Inspectors also heard how some of you had completed literacy and numeracy courses and were better prepared to support your children.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to meet with you. Your honest and open discussions helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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