

Inspection report for Bilston Nursery School Children's Centre

Local authority	Wolverhampton
Inspection number	362442
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Marian Harker HMI

Centre governance	Wolverhampton Local Authority
Centre leader	Miss Emma Smith
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Bilston Nursery School URN 132018
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Bilston Nursery School EY 272903

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.

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 additional inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior management team, representatives of the governing body and local authority, a range of agencies and parents and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Bilston Nursery School Children's Centre is situated near to Bilston town centre, east of Wolverhampton city centre. Bilston is among the highest 20% most deprived areas in the country. The majority of families surrounding the centre are White British. The remainder are from other ethnic minorities including Asian, Indian and mixed Black heritage. The area is characterised by high levels of unemployment and social deprivation. Most children enter child care and early education with skills that are lower than those expected for their age. The centre provides the full core offer and has its own governing body which is made up of representatives from the local community, Wolverhampton local authority, parents, the Primary Care Trust and centre staff. Bilston Nursery School Children's Centre has evolved from a nursery school to an early excellence centre. It opened as a Phase 1 children's centre in 2006. The centre is housed in a fully refurbished single storey Victorian school building with a large outdoor children's play area. The large majority of staff who work at the centre are employed by the governing body.

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 users and the wider community

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 provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for all its users. They appreciate the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. A typical view expressed by a user is, ‘The centre has a good reputation locally and I chose to come here rather than a centre nearer to home’. Central to these successes are the effective partnerships, most notably with health services, schools, social care and the voluntary sector. Working closely with these partners enables the centre to offer good quality services to the whole community.

A key strength of the centre is the good leadership provided by the centre manager and her leadership team. All appropriate policies and procedures are in place and up to date. Safeguarding and equality procedures are good. The centre has a good record of improving the safety of children subject to a child protection plan. Similarly, the centre’s commitment to promoting equality and diversity are clear. Staff employed at the centre speak a number of community languages, and wall displays reflect positive role models. Users’ views are sought regularly through informal conversations and through the Parent’s Forum. These views are beginning to play an increasingly important role in the running of the centre. The centre is contributing positively to the long-term goal of reducing child poverty through the advice it gives on benefit entitlement and training, but recognises that stronger links with Jobcentre Plus would add further to adult users’ employment opportunities.

Observations by inspectors, data scrutinised, evaluations conducted by the centre and case studies demonstrate that outcomes for users are good. The provision and outcomes for promoting healthy lifestyles is outstanding. The centre offers a wide range of services to support families and children in making healthy choices. In particular, the regular swimming sessions offered for adults and children are very popular and sometimes oversubscribed.

Children, including those who are vulnerable or with disabilities, gain much from the imaginative range of activities on offer. They make good progress when attending the nursery or wide range of birth to five groups on offer, such as Little Treasures or Little Explorers. The centre is particularly successful in improving children’s personal,

social and emotional development with most children making outstanding gains in this area. By the time children leave the nursery to join Reception classes in their chosen primary school, children's skills and experiences are broadly similar to those expected for their age across the areas of learning.

There is a wide representation of partners on the governing body and they provide support and challenge to the senior leadership team. The senior team accurately evaluates the effectiveness of the centre and identifies areas for improvement. However, the centre is currently working from a number of different development plans, rather than one clear plan, and this has not been helpful in enabling senior leaders or the governing body to monitor progress with accuracy. Furthermore, outcomes for adults who access learning and training opportunities through the centre are not currently recorded effectively. This limits the effectiveness of managers to precisely identify areas for future development.

The accuracy of self-evaluation, the quality of services observed the strength of partnership working and the good outcomes for children demonstrate the centre's good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure the centre has an appropriate development plan that sets out clear priorities with measurable targets for improvement and regular milestones to enable senior leaders and the governors to evaluate progress.
- Improve systems and procedures to evaluate the longer term impact of the provision and outcomes for adults who use the centre to gain access to further training or employment.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Increasing numbers of users access the services provided by the centre and take-up rates are high, particularly for crèche facilities, swimming activities and those families working with family support workers. Groups that attend the centre are from a variety of backgrounds and all work harmoniously together, contributing positively to community cohesion. Users report that their confidence and self-esteem has improved since attending the centre.

Users respond exceedingly well to the centre's promotion of healthy diets and of regular exercise in sessions such as Buggy Pushers and Bilston Moms In Control, which supports weight loss and healthy eating. One parent typically commented, 'I did not know you could buy healthy foods so cheaply, no one has ever taught me how to keep my family healthy before.' Children are provided with nutritious meals and taught the value of regular exercise from an early age. An increasing number of users are seeking advice and support to stop smoking and attending breastfeeding groups. Discussions with parents and carers, show that these classes successfully

develop the skills necessary to promote healthy lifestyles.

Social workers report that they value the expertise among the staff and their commitment to protecting the most vulnerable children. Centre staff know the families they work with very well. Consequently, early identification and prevention play a key role in the work of the centre to reduce harm to children. There is good evidence of improved outcomes for children with child protection plans and those who are looked after. These outcomes are in part a result of a pre-nursery group pilot scheme, specifically for vulnerable two-year-olds, including those subject to the common assessment framework process. The funding for the continuation of this pilot scheme is uncertain.

Children make outstanding progress in developing their personal and social skills and their behaviour is good. They play happily together, co-operate well and are given many opportunities to develop independent learning skills. These gains are the result of well-planned and enjoyable learning activities. The full range of provision prepares the children well for their future. Parents and carers also benefit from opportunities to attend first aid and food hygiene courses. The centre recognises that there remains scope to increase adult involvement in training and education.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	1
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 users 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 users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

Strong links with partner agencies enables the centre to understand and assess users' needs well and tailor services accordingly. For example, a lone carer was able to provide better quality care for her children following support and guidance from a family support worker. This support included a number of referrals to other agencies and resulted in improved parenting skills and better outcomes for the children and their carer. This is typical of many examples of the sensitive care, guidance and support provided by the centre.

The Dads' Football Team and the Communication Enrichment Group are helping parents to enjoy parenthood and benefit from expert advice on difficulties they may be experiencing with their children's development. Parents speak positively about the support for teenage parents and the regular health visitor drop in sessions. Sessions and courses observed by inspectors were good quality and demonstrated purposeful learning. As a result of the centre publicising its services well, participation rates have improved greatly over the last two years.

Children's needs are accurately assessed, and the activities planned are enjoyable and relevant to their interests. For example, a number of children recently showed a great interest in different types of transport through their play. The staff used this information to arrange visits to the local fire station, ambulance service and Birmingham airport.

There are a number of local outreach providers offering learning and education opportunities for users. As a result, the centre does not offer a wide range of these services on site. The centre is effective in signposting users and making referrals to other education and training providers. Senior leaders recognise the need to improve tracking systems and procedures to enable them to assess the impact of the centre's work for this group of adults over time.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Leaders and managers at all levels have a clear view of the provision and know where improvements should be made. This is reflected in their accurate self-assessment. The centre is aware of the need to bring together the range of development plans that are currently in place to improve the effectiveness of improvement planning. Staff are supervised well and effectively supported to improve their practice through performance management procedures and professional supervision. Users' views are used to shape developments and inform evaluations. For example, the youngest children requested an adventure playground with low level equipment and this has resulted in a significant improvement to the outdoor play environment for all children. Parents and carers too are encouraged to offer their views at Parent Forum meetings.

Equality and diversity are promoted successfully. This is because all services are designed to engage users from the range of backgrounds in the local area. Children with disabilities are supported sensitively by centre staff and resources carefully chosen to promote equality and challenge stereotypical views. For example, children recently received a visit from a local female police officer and fire fighter.

The centre’s child protection policy and guidelines for staff are robust and all staff have been trained at the appropriate level in child protection procedures. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known and a high priority across the work of the centre. The single central record detailing Criminal Records Bureau checks is well organised and meets the latest requirements.

The centre manager provides purposeful and dedicated leadership that effectively brings together the wide range of agencies working with the centre and their families. For example, social workers report that timely intervention by centre staff significantly reduced the risk of harm to children in a home that was experiencing domestic violence.

Members of the governing body are committed to improving outcomes for children and families in Bilston. Parents are well represented on the governing body and are knowledgeable about the work of the centre. The centre uses its resources judiciously with good outcomes and therefore 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 extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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 evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the	2

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

The Ofsted report for Bilston Nursery School conducted in July 2010 was taken into account. The overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding.

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 Bilston Nursery School Children's Centre on 22-23 September 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for making us so welcome when we inspected your children's centre recently. The centre provides a good range of services that are helping children and families in Bilston. Throughout the inspection, parents and carers were keen to tell us how they had benefitted from support provided by the centre. We were also impressed by case studies that show how lives have been transformed through links with the centre.

The centre is working well with a range of partners such as social care, health services and schools. It provides good support for children who attend the nursery, crèche and day care groups. As a result, many children make outstanding progress in their personal and social skills. The centre makes sure that adults are guided well so they can realise their potential. The centre has been particularly successful in ensuring that children and adults have every opportunity to learn about how to lead a healthy life. This is an outstanding aspect of the centre's work.

The variety of courses and services provided meet a wide range of needs well. Little Treasures and Little Explorers are well attended sessions and provide good opportunities for parents and their children to play and learn together. Breastfeeding and Baby Massage courses are led by well-trained and enthusiastic staff.

The centre is well led and managed by the centre manager and her team. The Parents' Forum is supportive of the centre and suggests ways of improving things. The building work that is about to take place shows the good impact parents and carers have on decision-making. The centre works closely with social services to ensure the safety of children. It has a good record of improving the safety of children subject to a child protection plan.

The inspectors have made the following recommendations to help improve the centre.

- Make sure the centre has a development plan that has clear priorities for improvement and sets regular targets that can be measured to show how well it is doing.
- Make sure that the centre carefully tracks how many adults take up training courses or gain employment as a result of their work.

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