

Inspection report for Ormiston Children's Centre Berechurch

Local authority	Essex
Inspection number	365769
Inspection dates	25–26 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Priscilla McGuire AI

Centre governance	Ormiston Children & Families Trust
Centre leader	Beryl Tatlow
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	The Ormiston Centre
	School Road
	Colchester
	CO2 8NN
Telephone number	01206 578978
Fax number	01206 571818
Email address	beryl.tatlow@ormiston.org

Linked school if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Puddleducks Day Care

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.

Published: February 2011

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's staff, an area manager from Ormiston Children and Families Trust, users of the services and representatives of the advisory board, the partnership board, the local authority, the health services and other local external organisations.

They observed the centre's work, visited external venues where services are delivered and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The Berechurch Children's Centre is a phase 2 centre which was set up in 2007. It is managed by the Ormiston Children and Families Trust. The centre operates from a single-storey building owned by the trust and situated on grounds owned by Essex County Council. Accommodation at the centre is spacious and includes a sensory room, outdoor play areas and a community cafe. The centre is located in the south of the town and serves areas within the Colchester wards of Berechurch, East Donyland and Harbour. The centre is close to local infant, junior and comprehensive schools. Day nursery provision is offered by Puddleducks Nursery which is about a mile from the centre.

Berechurch has pockets of high deprivation. Most families are of White British heritage, although there is a small representation of other minority ethnic groups in the area. The proportion of children who achieve 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage is very slightly higher than the national average. The proportion of children under five living in households where families are in receipt of out-of-work benefits or tax credits is higher than the national average.

The centre offers the full core offer and targeted services. Outreach services are delivered at other locations within the reach area which include community centres and the local garrison.

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

Ormiston Berechurch offers good provision which leads to good outcomes for users. Leadership and management of the centre are good and staff are highly committed to improving the lives of families. The centre is very popular with users, and participation rates at activities and events are very good. Users feel very welcomed by staff to the extent that one user said, ‘The best thing about being here is that it feels like you’re part of a family.’

The centre makes an important contribution to the excellent progress of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage in local schools. One parent said, ‘Since my son started coming here, his pronunciation has improved.’ Children’s social development is also good and parents value the opportunities their children have to participate in mixed-age activities. Parents, many of whom are young parents and carers receive excellent support to overcome barriers and to make meaningful progress in their personal and social development. However, opportunities for adult learning, particularly in relation to users developing work-related skills, are very limited.

Self-evaluation is a rigorous and continually improving process. A member of staff within Ormiston Children and Families Trust has designated responsibility for conducting evaluations across all children’s centres operated by the trust. She produces an annual plan for evaluation, which is used to measure and monitor the impact of activities and services offered at the centre. Evaluation is effective because it provides useful information about which of the centre’s services and activities are well attended and have a positive impact on users. A modified evaluation process is used to ensure users with learning difficulties can also share their views. Users’ views are valued and engagement with users is excellent. However, the involvement of users at a more formal level has not yet been achieved. Representation of parents and carers on the advisory board has not yet been secured nor has a parents' forum been established.

The assessment of individual needs is excellent and effective. Partnership arrangements are outstanding and used very well to provide a range of services and

support that meets the needs of users and the wider community. Health visitors and a wide range of other health professionals work well with the centre's staff to promote the physical and emotional health of users. The use of quantitative data to support the process of assessing the wider needs of the community remains a challenge as access to detailed statistics about the area is limited, particularly in relation to health data. The local authority recognises the need for data at reach level to be provided to the centre.

Safeguarding arrangements to protect children from harm are effective, and collaborative work between partners and centre staff ensure that the most appropriate action is taken as soon as concerns are identified. Risk assessments of activities are effective and appropriate. Provision of general safeguarding information is satisfactory. However, safeguarding information specific to the centre and its users is insufficiently detailed. The inclusion of all families is actively promoted and centre staff have a good understanding of the needs of vulnerable groups. The centre has contributed significantly towards narrowing the gap in achievement between the number of children who achieve the 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage and those who do not.

Given the good outcomes and quality of provision, the centre's overall effectiveness is good. The good outcomes, the good quality of provision and the strong focus on continuous improvement, indicate that the centre has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure the local authority provides the centre with relevant data at reach level.
- Formalise arrangements to capture the views of parents and carers and secure their representation on the advisory board.
- Explore opportunities to expand the range of work-related training available for adults.
- Improve methods of publicising information about safeguarding procedures to users.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Outcomes for users are good, particularly in relation to the enjoyment and achievement of children and the health of users. The centre's staff work well with a range of other professionals such as health visitors, midwives, nutrition specialists, psychologists and counsellors. The centre is instrumental in improving the health and well-being of users, particularly those whose circumstances leave them socially isolated. Outcomes for users who participate in learning activities to develop their parenting and other skills are outstanding. Parents and carers enjoy learning and benefit from structured learning activities but also from sharing experiences with

other users. Personal and social development of users, particularly in relation to their growth in confidence, is also outstanding. There are a significant number of teenage parents within the reach area and they benefit from targeted support to improve their own emotional and physical health and also that of their children. Mothers at the local garrison who experience emotional isolation particularly during periods when their husbands are out of the country, have also increased their parenting and social skills through their participation in and enjoyment of sessions such as 'Baby Massage' which are offered at the garrison.

Sessions such as 'Fun, Food and Fitness' have helped young parents learn how to eat healthily and provide healthy meals for their children. The activity combines healthy eating with an aerobics sessions so parents and carers learn how to develop their physical health through exercise. One parent wrote in her feedback about the sessions, 'I like having recipes to try that are healthy ... I found it interesting knowing about how much fat was in some foods.' Recipes used in sessions are promoted in the community cafe for all users to try at home.

The number of children who now achieve 78 points on the Early Years Foundation Stage has increased significantly in recent years. Both children and parents enjoy attending the centre. One parent said, 'I've made lots of friends since I started coming here and my son gets very excited about coming to the centre.' The achievement of children is actively celebrated, and their bright, colourful artwork is displayed on walls at the centre. Parents and teachers report that the speech and language of children and their social development have improved significantly since they started to attend sessions. This has made their transition to school a positive experience. The behaviour of children at the centre is good.

Children and families involved with the centre are effectively safeguarded. Staff use the Common Assessment Framework as appropriate to assess the needs of families and liaise well with other agencies to ensure children are protected from harm. Staff work well with other partners to ensure families with children on child protection plans receive effective and immediate help and support. The centre has been actively involved in helping families progress to the point where their children are removed from the child protection register. There is effective training of all staff in safeguarding. Safety of and for children is regularly reinforced during sessions and through work on specific themes such as 'road safety'. Safeguarding of children is promoted adequately. Users are given verbal guidance about safeguarding but there is insufficient publicity and written information about safeguarding procedures to reinforce verbal messages about safeguarding and ensure users know what action to take if they have safeguarding concerns.

Relationships between staff and users are excellent. One parent said, 'I love it so much here; I don't want to go home.' Users feel their views are highly valued and make a difference. They make an active contribution to the operation of the centre through evaluations which are carried out on a planned and regular basis, through a feedback board in the community cafe which is used to capture users' views and through regular consultation with staff. Users are regularly involved in decision-

making at an informal level. Changes made as a direct result of user input include the development of outdoor play areas and alterations to the content of sessions. Partners and users comment favourably about the positive impact of the centre in the community. However, the centre is still exploring ways to secure the participation of parents at a governance level.

Good links with Jobcentre Plus have helped to allay users' fears about the impact of employment on their benefits. Information and guidance from a Jobcentre Plus representative, who visits the centre for fixed appointments and also attends some 'Stay and Play' sessions, gives users the opportunity to request and receive information and guidance about benefits, welfare, work or training. Some users have progressed to training and employment but precise figures are not available. The centre offers some training in courses such as 'First Aid' but there is little work-related training available or courses that can enable users to achieve greater economic independence.

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	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

The quality of provision at the centre is good. Assessment of users' needs is outstanding. Staff at the centre have an excellent understanding of the individual needs of users and their families and the needs of the wider community. Partnership work with other agencies to assess individual needs is excellent. Staff also use the expertise of other professionals such as clinical and educational psychologists to ensure both their assessment of users' needs and their response to those needs are appropriate, effective and informed by sound evidence. Effective outreach work is undertaken in communities to promote access to services by the wider community. For example, some activities are delivered at community centres to engage hard-to-reach groups. Home visits in partnership with other agencies are also used effectively to reach vulnerable members of the local community and to make a sensitive response to their needs. Staff also attend multi-agency meetings to identify needs of

non-users. The Common Assessment Framework is also used well by all staff and partners to identify the most appropriate intervention for a family.

Staff make excellent use of qualitative information, local intelligence, links with external agencies and available data to match provision and services to needs of users and the wider community. The trust is also very proactive in carrying out research and producing reports to assess both the needs of the local community and users. For example, the centre has been successful in reaching out to hard-to-reach groups that were previously non-users such as families in the local garrison and families of prisoners. Staff have an expert understanding of the barriers users face because of their particular circumstances. For example, the rate of teenage pregnancies in the reach area is high and some younger parents have needed support to improve their attachment to their children and develop their parenting skills. A 'Teens with Tots' course offered by the centre helps young parents develop their parenting skills and build good relationships with their children.

The quality and range of services and activities for users and the wider community are excellent and have a positive impact on the lives of users. Activities are well planned with clearly identified aims and objectives to meet Early Years Foundation Stage and Every Child Matters outcomes. Each activity and event offered at the centre is designed to promote achievement against outcomes that will promote learning and development for parents and children. Participation rates are excellent. Sessions and activities include parenting courses to develop the parenting skills of parents, activities to promote the speech, language and social development of children and other activities to promote well-being and good emotional health. One user said about her participation in a women's support group, 'I learnt new skills to help me make informed decisions.'

Users at the centre feel very valued and supported. One user said, 'The staff helped me to use a sleep routine at bedtime for my child and it worked. To this day, he is still sleeping well.' Another parent said, 'It's not just about the children here, it's about families.' The needs of whole families and not just children, inform the work of staff at the centre. Multi-agency working with a wide range of organisations is effective in enabling the centre to work collaboratively and successfully to provide a cohesive and integrated package of support for users and the wider community. Services on offer to meet the specific needs of users include access to counselling support and to the services of a teenage pregnancy link worker. The centre also provides a wide range of booklets and leaflets which cover topics such as healthy eating, smoking cessation, home safety and adult learning.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
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	1
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

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and effective and the centre is well managed. The centre manager and staff are well respected by users and by external organisations. The staff team are highly committed to improving the lives of users and the wider community. Partners are well represented on the advisory board and are well informed about the strategic direction of the centre and its role in the community. Support and challenge for the centre are provided by both the advisory board and the partnership board for the Ormiston Trust. Both boards recognise that the involvement of parents and carers at governance level remains a challenge for the centre.

Performance management is effective and there is a systematic and planned approach to monitoring provision and performance. Key performance indicators have been set for all Ormiston operated children's centres. Annual reviews of service provision are well informed by evaluations of activities and events, surveys and meetings between the centre manager and the area manager for the trust and with the local authority.

Self-evaluation tools are effective and designed to measure users' views and the impact of provision. For example a 'distance travelled' tool has been used to track the impact of activities on the lives of users. There is a strong culture of continuous improvement at the centre which extends to the advisory and partnership boards. For example, the advisory board has explored ways of improving its effectiveness. Meanwhile, the partnership board developed a 'buddy' system to ensure board members have direct links with designated centre managers and with users.

The centre manager makes excellent use of qualitative data and research to develop services. Some quantitative data are available about the reach area but are not yet detailed enough to allow for comparisons at local and national level. The delivery plan for all Ormiston children's centres and the service plan for Berechurch Centre, inform the direction and priorities of the centre. Effective and quick action is taken by the manager to respond to areas for improvement.

Child protection is a key priority at the centre, and arrangements and partnership working to ensure children are safe are effective. Statutory requirements are well met and the recruitment of staff and volunteers is safe. Early intervention to prevent the escalation of problems is effective. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding, and general awareness raising about safeguarding is good. However, user-friendly policies and written information about safeguarding to reinforce users' understanding

of safeguarding procedures are insufficiently detailed and not well publicised.

Inclusion for all families is actively promoted and the needs of families with children or adults who have disabilities or additional needs are well met. For example, group sessions are arranged to help develop the parenting skills of adults with learning difficulties. Other activities and support have been arranged to meet the needs of parents who are disabled or who have children with additional needs. Activities to encourage the participation of fathers in antenatal clinics have been successful, and clinics are organised on a Sunday to encourage working fathers to attend.

Value for money is good. Accommodation is spacious at the centre and well used. Resources are managed well and the impact on users is good. They feel very welcomed at the centre and attendance rates at events are good. Joint sessions are organised with another children's centre to avoid duplication and make best use of resources. Staffing resources are also shared with other organisations to promote sharing of expertise to partner organisations within the wider community such as local schools.

Partnership work is outstanding and work with partners is very effective in providing services and activities to meet the needs of users and the wider community. There are mutual benefits to the centre and its partners as a result of their collaborative work. For example, work with Jobcentre Plus has enabled the agency to be able to meet users who would not previously have engaged with its services. Partnership work with health visitors and community midwives has led to referrals both to and from the service. Other work with partner organisations within the statutory and voluntary sectors has been very effective in enabling the centre to meet its priorities.

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	3
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	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community 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

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 Ormiston Children's Centre Berechurch on 25–26 January 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit we observed some of the centre's activities and documents and spoke to managers, staff and some of the other people from other organisations who work at the centre. We also spoke to many of you during our visit and really appreciate the time you spent talking to us.

You told us how much you and your children enjoy attending the centre and have benefited from activities organised at the centre. We recognise the key role the centre has in providing enjoyable activities that can help families improve their lives. We also know that the centre works really well with lots of other external organisations such as the health services, Jobcentre Plus and other organisations.

Many of you really like the baby massage sessions and have enjoyed learning how to make healthy meals at home. We have asked the centre to explore opportunities to provide more training courses at the centre.

You also value the opportunities you have to meet up with other parents, and some of you have made new and lasting friendships with some of the people you have met at the centre. You told us how you are made to feel welcome at the centre and that you receive good support from staff and the other professionals who work with the

centre. We found that the staff are very competent at finding out what type of support you need or what services would best help you and your families. We know the staff work hard to find out how best the centre can serve the community and we have asked the local authority to help the centre by providing more statistical information about the main characteristics of the local area, so that the services provided by the centre are appropriate to the needs of the community.

We know you feel safe at the centre and we know that staff have done lots of work to ensure you and your children are safe at home. However, we feel that the written information about safeguarding that you are given or that you see on display at the centre could be better.

Your views are highly valued by the centre and we know you complete evaluations on a regular basis and give the staff useful feedback about what you like at the centre or what you think could be improved. The centre has responded well to your suggestions. We think you could be even more involved in the operation of the centre and have asked the centre to look at ways of involving parents in the advisory board for the centre.

Thank you once again for your time and we wish you and your families all the best for the future.

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