

Inspection report for Wooburn Green and Bourne End Children's Centre

Local authority	Buckinghamshire County Council
Inspection number	367021
Inspection dates	19–20 January 2011
Reporting inspector	Champak Chauhan

Centre governance	Buckinghamshire County Council
Centre leader	Pauline McDougall
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school, if applicable	The Meadows School
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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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the coordinator of the centre, senior staff from the local authority, members of the advisory board, parents, staff and representatives from partner organisations. They observed the centre's work on the main site and outreach work undertaken in Bourne End, and they looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

This relatively new children's centre is located on the site of The Meadows School. It is a Phase 2 children's centre which covers the wards of The Wooburns, Bourne End, Flackwell Heath and Little Marlow. The centre is on one site, with no designated outside play area, although it uses the school's playground for activities during school holidays. Three hundred and sixty-five children are involved with the work of the centre, many of whom come from vulnerable families. The areas that the centre serves are regarded as mainly affluent, with small pockets of deprivation. Rates of employment are generally high and only 7% of children aged 0–4 live in households that are dependent on workless benefits. However, there is a small but significant number of parents facing isolation, 4% of whom are lone parents on limited incomes.

The limited size of the centre at Wooburn Green, restricted parking, limited bus services and the existence of several isolated communities mean that services are also delivered in community halls and libraries several miles away to enable greater local access. The centre's work with dispersed vulnerable families ranges from basic parenting support to more intensive interventions. Routine activities include programmes for babies and their mothers, pregnancy yoga classes, baby rhymes, bounce and rhyme, dinky dancers, stay and play, 'Mums of Steel', health visitor weaning, and 'Tiny Ballers', the last of which encourages fathers to participate on

Saturday mornings. Staff also attend child protection cases and other meetings as required. Children from the centre eventually attend a range of pre-school settings in the area. The centre deals primarily with babies and other very young children and their levels of entry to early years provision are average. The areas served by the centre are predominantly White British, with only 6% of children registered at the centre being of minority ethnic origin. The centre has had two posts of family support workers vacant for over a year and services have been maintained with the use of staff from a neighbouring provision. One permanent post was filled a few months ago and a temporary appointment has recently been made for the other. The work of the centre is overseen by an advisory board which is responsible to Buckinghamshire County Council.

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

Wooburn Green and Bourne End Children's Centre is highly valued by the community it serves. As one mother stated, 'We come here not because we have to but because we want to.' Its strong effectiveness leads to good outcomes for all its users.

Despite the relative lack of local authority data identifying needs in the reach area, the centre is particularly effective in gathering its own information and using this to analyse and respond effectively. In consequence, its reach into the community is good. It does this through a good range of formal and informal mechanisms. Action is then taken to offer a responsive range of services which meet the needs of all users. Participation rates in the sessions offered are high and there is constant feedback to the staff on the value and effectiveness of the services it offers, both at Wooburn Green and at Bourne End. Good mechanisms exist for constructive feedback, both through the Parents' Forum and through direct contact with the staff. As a result, user satisfaction rates are high and there is constant reflection by all concerned on what is offered.

The above approach ensures that users, mostly mothers with very young children, make good progress in their learning and personal development, and they thoroughly enjoy the activities. By the time children are aged four, their attainment is slightly higher than the national average. Parents and their children participate in interactive

learning sessions at the centre and in highly organised activities, for example the very successful Fun Day held annually in the summer which attracts large numbers from the community. Families are developing healthier lifestyles through better knowledge about healthier eating, adopting a more balanced diet and participating in regular exercise. Children grow food from seeds, for example bean shoots and green peppers, and take these home for cooking.

The friendly and welcoming environment ensures that all users are valued and that they are kept safe. The good arrangements for safeguarding and the regular inputs from centre staff and visiting professionals, for example health visitors, ensure that parents have a good understanding of how to keep their children and families safe. Very strong partnership working and the regular sharing of information ensure that the needs of any vulnerable children and their families are met. This is an integral part of the centre's strong vision on the inclusion of all, regardless of ethnicity or background. The centre promotes equality and diversity well. It also ensures that users are developing their economic and social well-being successfully. Good information and advice are offered, and appropriate training for employment opportunities are organised for those who need it. Good links have also been established with local schools to ensure continuity of care, guidance and support.

The centre's users are encouraged to make a positive contribution to life in the community. Good relationships have developed among centre users and there are very good links with other organisations, for example the local library, the community church and the police.

There is a strong belief running through the minds of leaders and managers at all levels that the centre should make a positive difference to the lives of the people who use it. They are successful in this and are constantly looking at ways of improving provision and outcomes for all. Leadership and management are strong and the centre has a good track record in improving outcomes because it knows its strengths and weaknesses well. Although managers already have a good understanding of the centre's performance, nevertheless, while the development plan identifies relevant priorities with suitably ambitious targets, it does not provide enough quantitative data or explicit success criteria which would make the planning and evaluation processes even sharper.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Ensure that the planning process identifies a greater range of quantitative data and more explicit success criteria that have been agreed by all partners so that the centre's evaluation procedures of its performance can be strengthened even more.
- Ensure that the centre and local authority collect and routinely share data about the centre's reach area and jointly analyse trends in need and outcomes.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

The health profile of the area covered by the centre is high and the centre successfully promotes healthier lifestyles for children and their parents and carers. Parents feel that their children under five undertake regular physical exercise at the centre and a large majority feel that the centre promotes healthier eating. They also feel they are given enough information about their child's development and health. A good range of services, with high participation rates, ensure the better health of parents and their children. This includes advice and guidance on fussy eaters, breast feeding, weaning, healthier cooking, baby massage, advice on dental hygiene, and 'Dinky Dancers' for physical exercise. Mothers readily engage in sessions led by the health visitor on weaning and they value the opportunities for physical activity through sessions on yoga during pregnancy and 'Mums of Steel' exercise sessions which they attend with their babies. Advice is offered on smoking cessation and parents know where to go to for advice on immunisation. Mothers also value the good advice and guidance offered by the community midwife. During school holidays, the centre promotes activities that encourage healthier lifestyles and which develop an awareness of the local environment and sustainable development. Train rides to local parks have encouraged families to explore areas outside their immediate vicinity. Fungi and bug hunts to local woodland areas, organised with local park rangers, encourage physical exercise and have made families more aware of the need to protect the natural environment.

All the centre's activities are based on ensuring that users feel safe. The centre's safeguarding procedures are robust. Access to the building is secure. Parents have a good understanding of how to keep their children and families safe. This is done through classes, for example on first aid training for babies and infants, which was requested by parents, and through various sessions run by community midwives and health visitors. Home safety visits are made when necessary and safety equipment installed for vulnerable families. Advice and guidance on the misuse of alcohol and drugs are readily available. The concerns of children and others with special educational needs and/or disabilities are addressed well. Appropriately safe activities have been organised for autistic children and those with physical disabilities. As one mum of a physically disabled child stated, 'I have a disabled son and I love the advice and support I get from my family support worker.'

The progress and development of those children on child protection plans are regularly monitored with the help of other professionals, for example health visitors and educational psychologists. Regular visits to such homes are made and detailed records kept. This involvement is leading to better care and outcomes for the children concerned. Strong inter-agency working has ensured that the Common Assessment Framework is used for children when necessary. Centre staff are fully involved in this process, monitor the progress of children, and regularly give feedback to other professionals about it. Outcomes for these children have improved as a result.

A large majority of parents feel that the centre offers enough opportunities for their

children to play and to learn new things. Parents, observed in the 'Baby Rhymes' session understood the importance of modelling songs to promote areas of learning, for example early number work. Children make good progress, especially in their personal development. Such sessions develop the skills of the children and their mothers in highly enjoyable ways, and levels of attendance and enjoyment are high. The interactive classes promote the social inclusion of all and behaviour is excellent. The 'Helping Hands' home visiting programme supports children's emotional development well and it has helped some parents to handle better the challenging behaviour of their children. The very good foundation laid down by the centre in the learning and personal development of children has led to above- average outcomes in the Foundation Stage Profile for the local area.

The centre is an important part of the community and it has good links with others, for example the community church, the police and Bourne End library. Users are regularly encouraged to communicate their views to the centre and many do so and are listened to. There is a tangible feeling among users that the centre belongs to them, and they treat each other and the centre staff with respect.

The centre provides good quality information, advice and guidance. Good support is provided to centre users in further training to enable them to secure better employment, for example in childminding. Take-up rates for training sessions are high. The centre also refers people to other agencies when appropriate, for example the Citizens Advice Bureau, and detailed advice is offered on welfare benefits and adult learning. Very good links exist with the Family Information Service which attends the larger community activities and which offers the full range of information for users. Vulnerable families are encouraged to participate in services through personal telephone contact by centre staff and this is leading to good and improving outcomes for such families.

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	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

Despite the relative lack of local authority data, staff at the centre know families and their communities well through a variety of information-gathering processes, both formal and informal. The Parents' Forum in particular is an important vehicle for the centre to respond to the changing needs and aspirations of the local community. Partnership working with professionals from health, social care and voluntary organisations is strong and families needing support are quickly identified and their needs thoroughly assessed.

The centre offers a good range of relevant services and activities, and it responds to local needs well. It found that some vulnerable families in the Flackwell Heath area were finding it difficult to access services because of the distances involved so the centre is locating services at more accessible venues. Some particularly good outreach work is undertaken by the family support workers at the library in Bourne End. At one 'Bouncy Rhyme' session observed, 35 mothers and their children attended. Childminding and baby sitting courses are offered with the help of the National Child Minding Association. Good links have been fostered with a local secondary school and a significant number of teenage girls attend the baby sitting course which is run after school. Services are discontinued where they are found not to be meeting needs. Thus, an externally run group on developing children's artistic and creative skills was disbanded after parents and centre staff had concerns about its effectiveness.

The centre staff are acutely aware of changing needs and circumstances. They are aware of relevant vulnerable families and groups, and serve their needs well. Staff are aware of a small but growing Polish community which is not yet within its reach area but which may well need its services in the future. The centre is conspicuously successful in promoting purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users. Very young children are making good progress in developing their cognitive and other skills through sessions such as 'Baby Rhymes' and 'Bouncy Rhymes' and 'Stay and Play'. Teddy bear hunts and nature treasure hunts have encouraged children to develop their inquisitive and investigation skills. Play and learn sessions held at the centre and undertaken in outreach work have helped families to understand the importance of learning through play. As one mother said, 'We enjoy these activities very much'. A first-time mother felt really supported by the centre. She said that the centre 'had been a life saver. I don't know what I would have done without them.'

The centre maintains close working relationships with local nurseries and schools so that children and their parents are given continuity of care, guidance and support. The centre staff have a good rapport with families and some turn to them in times of crisis. Such support is highly valued by the parents.

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

The centre coordinator provides clear leadership and direction to the work of the centre. Staff morale is high and the staff are welcoming to all. There are high expectations of staff, users and the wider community. The centre functions well on a day-to-day basis. The centre is supported effectively by senior staff from the local authority. Such staff are knowledgeable about the work of the centre, and offer good support and challenge to it. Procedures for performance management and target setting are clear and the centre staff have good access to professional development. Accountability arrangements are transparent and understood by all parties. All relevant information is routinely shared and staff value this.

The work of the centre is overseen by the advisory board which consists of a good range of partners. The advisory board supports and challenges the work of the centre well and it gives good strategic direction to its work. Governance is clear and all partners understand their roles in offering integrated provision to identified needs. The views of users are regularly taken into account and the centre responds well to these. It is also constantly striving for ways to include more families who need support. Resources are used efficiently. The accommodation is used well and it is kept in good condition. The budget is regularly monitored by the centre co-ordinator and funding is divided between different budgets so that users' needs can be more effectively met. The centre has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. However, development planning does not always identify quantitative data or explicit success criteria which would enable outcomes to be measured even more precisely.

The inclusion of all is central to the centre's vision and it meets all legal requirements, including those of the Disability Discrimination Act. The centre is accessible by wheelchair and it has a disabled toilet. Training for all staff in equality of opportunity is mandatory and staff use a good range of resources to celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity. The needs of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are met well through appropriate learning activities and offering respite care to parents. One mother with a disabled child stated, 'Thank you for being there when I needed you.' Another was highly complimentary about the support provided to her autistic child. Another child with speech and language difficulties was given additional therapy by a specialist after intervention by the centre's staff. In addition to such cases, the centre runs activities on Saturdays to ensure that working fathers can attend with their children.

Procedures for safeguarding are robust. All permanent staff, volunteers and others who have regular access to children have been checked by the Criminal Records Bureau and the centre follows the local authority's procedures on the safer recruitment of staff. A single central record is maintained of all personnel who work with children, not just the permanent staff. This register is regularly reviewed and updated. Training in safeguarding and child protection is up to date and staff have valued its quality. Staff also attend other training, for example in protecting disabled children or in working with challenging families.

Good protocols exist for working with other agencies, and relevant information about vulnerable families is quickly shared for early intervention. Good links exist, for example, with health visitors, community midwives and the police to reduce the risk to children. As a result of joint working with the educational psychology service, staff started dealing with issues of domestic violence and anger management. Sensitive work is also undertaken with other known victims of domestic violence. Staff are acutely aware of safeguarding matters and the need to enhance the emotional health and well-being of vulnerable families.

Overall, the capacity for sustained improvement is good. The centre uses the resources available to it efficiently and, given the good outcomes, it offers good value for money.

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	3
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 range of provision	2

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

Not applicable

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 Wooburn Green and Bourne End centre on 19 and 20 January 2011. Thank you to all of you who found the time to speak to us. We judged the centre as good overall.

You value your children's centre and many of you spoke highly about its work and the impact it has had on your lives and the lives of your children. This is supported further by your views that are submitted regularly to the centre through the annual survey, local surveys, the Parents' Forum and the advisory board. We agree with your views.

Your centre provides a good range of services at the main site in Wooburn Green and at the library in Bourne End. The broad range of services include, for example, programmes for babies and their mothers, pregnancy yoga classes, stay and play, 'Mums of Steel', weaning, and activities for dads to undertake with their children on Saturdays. Participation rates at these activities are high and you enjoy them. These activities are offered after a thorough analysis of needs based on information you have given to the centre.

The activities lead to good outcomes for all users. Parents and their children make good progress in their learning and personal development and the attainment of your children by the time they are aged four is slightly higher than the national average. Families are developing healthier lifestyles through better knowledge about healthier eating, the need for a more balanced diet and the importance of regular physical exercise. The centre enables this not only through the sessions it organises, for example with health visitors, but also through the organisation of walks through the woodlands. The annual Fun Days organised at the local green in the summer are particularly successful in promoting a good range of activities to keep you and your children healthy.

The centre offers you good information and advice on a broad range of issues, including smoking cessation, breast feeding, caring for new babies, and the misuse of alcohol and drugs. Advice is also offered on how to access welfare benefits should you require them and further training is organised for those of you who want better

employment prospects. You are encouraged well to make a positive contribution to the community and many of you do so. It was noticeable to us that the centre has encouraged some strong friendships among its users.

You and your children are kept safe by the centre through its robust arrangements for safeguarding. Staff who work with the children are appropriately vetted and information is regularly reviewed and updated. The centre has fostered very good partnerships with a wide range of professionals, for example community midwives, the police, educational psychologists and social workers, to ensure that the needs of vulnerable families and their children are met. This approach forms an integral part of the centre's strong vision on the inclusion of all, regardless of ethnicity or background.

The centre has a welcoming environment and staff morale is high. Many of you enjoy attending the sessions and value the help the staff give you. There is a strong belief among the staff and others associated with the centre that it should make a positive difference to the lives of the people who use its services. The centre is conspicuously successful in this. Its leadership and management are strong and the advisory board and centre staff are continuously looking at ways to improve the centre's services and outcomes for you and your children. You play an important role in this process through the views you express. The centre's development plan identifies relevant priorities with suitably ambitious targets. However, it does not contain enough quantitative data to enable it to measure its success precisely. Not all partners contribute enough to this process. We have also asked the centre and local authority to work together on improving the quality and range of data that the centre has so that it can tune the quality and range of its services even more effectively to the needs of the community. These are the two areas that we have asked the centre to address to make it even better.

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