

Inspection report for Williton Children's Centre

Local authority	Somerset
Inspection number	362518
Inspection dates	17–18 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Robert Pyner HMI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Samantha Fahey
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Killick Way
	Williton
	TA4 4QA
Telephone number	01984 630980
Email address	sfahey@educ.somerset.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Little Horseshoe Nursery EY304032

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 an Early Years Inspector.

The inspectors visited a range of provision at the centre and other venues used by it. They held meetings with senior managers from the centre, the chair and members of the advisory board and a number of partners, including the main Early Years Foundation Stage and childcare provider, health, education and children's social care professionals. They also spoke with representatives from Jobcentre Plus and with users of the services. An inspector interviewed senior managers from the local authority responsible for services in the locality. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a wide range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Williton Children's Centre serves a large rural area in west Somerset. The manager also leads the children's centre in Watchet and many of the services provided are offered jointly across the two centres. Williton was originally designated to serve one of the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country; however, the latest local authority data shows that, broadly, it serves an averagely disadvantaged area. The proportion of workless families is around 25% and about one sixth of families receive child tax credits. Nearly all families in the reach area are of White British heritage.

The centre originated as part of the Sure Start programme and opened in 2006 with the full core offer available since this date. It is based in good-quality, purpose-built accommodation in the centre of Williton. Located very close by are a GP surgery, library and district council offices. The centre runs an extensive range of outreach services at other locations linked with health, education, social care and work-related professionals, together with voluntary groups such as Citizens Advice Bureau. The centre has been part of a government-funded Jobcentre Plus pilot helping parents with a range of support and work-related services. This has included a

Jobcentre Plus representative available at the centre throughout the working week. This pilot ends in March 2011.

The centre has a single advisory board for both the Williton and Watchet centres which was set up in May 2010 with representatives from a range of partners and led by a parent. Previously governance was exercised as a parents' forum covering both centres.

Childcare and nursery education is provided by The Little Horseshoe Nursery based on the site of a first school near to the centre. The latest report for this provision can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The manager of the centre took up her post as leader of both Williton and Watchet children's centres 18 months ago.

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

Williton Children's Centre provides good support to children and families in its reach area. Some outcomes, aspects of provision and elements of leadership and management are outstanding. The common thread throughout the high level of service is the drive and ambition of the centre staff, very ably led by the manager, which result in the range and effectiveness of the partnerships established with a wide range of providers to develop a cohesive approach to the needs of the community.

An outstanding feature is the flexible way that the needs of users are assessed and addressed to tailor specific support. An example of this is the extensive range of outreach provision in this rural area. This is greatly appreciated by the users and the hosts of the services, for example schools. There are examples of community members taking on the delivery of services following outreach work by the centre. For example, 'stay and play' sessions for parents and young children were set up by volunteers in three settings following on from provision by centre staff. Staff

understand the community the centre serves very well and it is becoming central to the work of other groups. An example of this is the role played by the centre in the Quantock Federation of Schools. The manager is a governor for the federation with responsibility for safeguarding. However, despite extensive local knowledge about the needs of the community, together with some data on the outcomes of provision, evaluation information is not collected in a cohesive and systematic way to measure outcomes and support planning for improvement.

The effective partnership with the health service has resulted in regular meetings between centre staff and health visitors to discuss individual families and identify those who could benefit from the centre's provision. The outcomes for families in developing healthy lifestyles and addressing welfare concerns are outstanding. Safeguarding procedures developed by the centre are excellent and issues of equality are dealt with well.

The manager leads Williton and Watchet children's centres and since her appointment, she has used her previous experience in other posts in the local area to develop excellent partnerships and drive improvement. The centre staff show very high morale and a clear commitment to improve and adapt provision for families in the reach area. Part of the improvement plan for the centre is the development of the advisory board with representatives from a range of partners offering services through the centre, as well as parents and users. The group has been established and a chair appointed, but is yet to take on fully a more strategic role in reviewing the outcomes of the centre in a systematic way and using this information to guide the development of the centre.

Given the good and better outcomes, the centre's overall effectiveness is good and improving strongly. This, together with the manager's drive, accurate self-evaluation and partnership approach focused on improvement, indicates that the centre has a good capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The senior leadership team should use outcome data and evaluations by users in a more cohesive way to measure effectiveness and support improvement planning.
- Improve the strategic role of the advisory board by developing the use of a range of information about users' outcomes to measure the success of the centre's activities, hold senior leaders to account for performance and guide improvements.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

An extensive range of provision relating to the promotion of healthy lifestyles is offered by the centre, much of it involving high-quality partnership work with health professionals. Health visitors and family support workers meet regularly, which means that families can be referred easily for support from the centre. Health visitors have a dedicated base at the linked nursery. The centre plays an important part in the provision of health-related courses and activities. These include baby clinics and a baby café which is used by health professionals to support breastfeeding. One mother said: 'This is such a supportive environment and I have made friends for life.' Specific courses for young mothers have included parenting, cooking and nutrition and activities to develop skills and confidence. The 'Colour me beautiful' make-over day was very well received and the group have made a DVD on their experiences as young mothers which is being used in local schools. The centre offers counselling services in partnership with MIND, which supports local people while on waiting lists for formal diagnosis and treatment. Plans are in place to use the accommodation as a base for child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) professionals on completion of the building work currently being undertaken at the centre.

Safeguarding procedures for children using the centre are highly effective. Staff are trained to use the common assessment framework to ensure issues are recorded and shared appropriately. Assessment and recording procedures are very effective and understood by partners. There is extensive training for staff on safeguarding, particularly for vulnerable children, which includes the linked nursery staff. Links with Home Start, a charity supported by Barnardos, and Children's Learning Opportunities in West Somerset (CLOWNS) enables outreach work with families in challenging circumstances, including those located in isolated communities.

Data from the schools in the reach area indicate the progress the children make by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved since 2008 and that attainment is broadly average by the time they enter Year 1. The centre teacher has good contacts with schools and the linked nursery, together with providing support for a range of courses to promote learning. An example of one of these is the Active Outdoors course which utilises the environment of the area including forests and beaches to develop learning opportunities for parents and children. These are developed further in the centre with linked activities to encourage learning at home. The learning sessions directly offered through the centre and via outreach include the peer early education partnership (PEEP) sessions and the positive parenting programme (Triple P).

The centre has introduced a parents' circle for the combined centres to support aims and provide a focus within the community. So far there have been two meetings and the group is at a fairly early state of development. There are individual procedures that staff use to gain the views of users and some of these are highly appropriate for users. There is less evidence of the systematic analysis of this information to develop provision. The young parents' group have been effective in working within the community. For example, they were recognised by the council for their fund-raising

for the White Ribbon Alliance, a charity that supports mothers in developing countries.

The centre offers a wide range of support to parents in order to develop economic stability and independence. A strong feature is the partnership with Jobcentre Plus as part of a pilot project, which means that staff are available at the centre for consultation. This has been enhanced by outreach work. Links with a range of partners has led to accredited courses in parenting through, for example, the Council for Awards in Children's Care and Education. A partnership with the Citizen's Advice Bureau has led to effective work with users on debt management.

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	1
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

The centre is highly effective in ensuring that users' welfare needs are assessed and reviewed. Clear procedures for sharing information and a very secure understanding of families within the reach area results in carefully planned and flexible support being available. This is seen in the provision developed through the centre and the wider support groups, for example the multi-agency information sharing in early years (MAISEY) and the action review for vulnerable children in early years (ARCHEY).

There is ample evidence from the inspection that there is a high-quality range of courses and activities that promote purposeful learning and development. Discussions with users show that they feel that they thoroughly enjoy the learning provision and that they have opportunities to develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. Users have had opportunities to develop activities based on needs and interests and these have included first aid courses for young mothers and support for basic literacy and numeracy. Some courses lead to accredited awards and transferable work skills. As well as this, the centre provides support and friendship in

an isolated area. As one young mum said: 'If the centre was not here, I do not know what I would do.'

A range of good-quality care, guidance and support is offered by the centre. Highly effective partnerships and systematic information sharing means that parents generally have a good-quality of information, advice and guidance about services available and contacts for health and social care. The centre provides comprehensive information on provision available for families in the reach area, but less evidence is available regarding the quality of information, advice and guidance for users on smoking, alcohol and drug misuse and sexual health.

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 at the centre is developing well. The advisory board was set up formally in May 2010 and has a full complement of 16 members with representatives from private, voluntary and independent partners, the police, health, the local church, MIND, local authority social care and parents. A chair of the board has been elected. The establishment of the advisory board has been a significant development in the life of the centre and the group has held regular meetings since its inception. Now that the formal structure has been developed, the board is developing a more strategic approach to support and challenge the centre.

The centre manager is totally committed to the development of services and benefits from the support of a highly motivated team. Using her local knowledge and previous experience, she has been highly effective in developing the multi-agency partnership approach adopted by the centre. In this she has shown the highest expectations and considerable drive. The high-quality accommodation at the centre is used very well with plans to update the facilities in order to improve provision further. There is excellent use of community venues to promote effective outreach work. Overall, resources of all kinds are used and managed very effectively. Safeguarding, vetting and recruiting procedures are of an excellent quality.

Self-evaluation is accurate and this has been used effectively by the centre to

develop a detailed business plan. The self-evaluation process uses a range of views from users and providers, but these are not collated and analysed in a systematic manner in order to provide cohesive priorities for improvement.

The inclusion of all children and families is at the heart of the work of the centre. Positive images, resources and tailored programmes highlight the centre's determination to support groups who may be subject to discrimination. For example, the centre has forged links with the youth service to provide a base for a girls' group, which enables them to learn appropriate skills and gain in confidence, as well as being able to share concerns with youth leaders.

Overall, the good and better outcomes, the high-quality outreach work, strength of the leadership, effectiveness of the multi-agency partnerships and the excellent drive for improvement means that the centre provides outstanding 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	1
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	1
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	1
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

No other information was used to inform the judgements made during this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Williton Children's Centre on 17–18 November 2010. We judged the centre as good overall. Some aspects are outstanding.

Your children's centre provides an outstanding range of services that are helping families and children in Williton and the large rural area surrounding the village. During the inspection, some of you told us how you had benefited from the support provided by the centre. An example of this effective work is the popular stay and play facility, baby café and young mothers' programme for parents and children, which enables the development of parenting, social and learning skills. An excellent aspect of the centre is the highly effective partnerships with other organisations including health and Jobcentre Plus. For example, the centre has regular meetings with health visitors and this enables support for individual families to be coordinated to ensure that an appropriate range of services are offered. The Jobcentre Plus staff, who have been based at the centre over the last two years, have supported some of you to develop skills and understand entitlements for benefits and tax credits.

A great strength of the centre is the quality of its outreach work. The centre offers a comprehensive range of activities in other places, such as schools and church halls, and this is popular with users as these are often closer to home. Parents and users told us that they appreciated the opportunity to use services near their homes such as 'stay and play'.

The centre works in a highly effective way to ensure the safety of children and there are good links with social services. The centre itself is a very safe environment for users and their children. When families find themselves in difficulty or even in crisis, the centre is able to help them effectively by providing information and support, including for general health and mental health, debt management and benefits.

The manager is committed to improvement and has been very effective in using her role as leader of Watchet Children's Centre to ensure that good practice is shared. Both centres have adopted a single advisory board to support work and to help to develop services. A parent has been elected as chair and workers from health, education, social care and other partners have been recruited to join the board. The

board is now working on better ways to review the provision at both centres in order that services can be adapted to meet the changing needs of families.

In discussion with users, many of you expressed appreciation for the support, courses and programmes available through the centre. Many involve participants in giving their view of the activities and this helps the centre to improve provision. However, this information is not collated by the centre in systematic way to help plan for improvements.

As part of the report, inspectors have made the following recommendations to help improve provision at the centre.

- Leaders at the centre should use the outcomes from activities and courses, as well as the evaluations by users, in a better way to support improvements.
- The role of the advisory board should be developed to support improvements at the centre in order to meet the changing needs of users.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak to us; we are very grateful and we wish you every success for the future.

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