

Inspection report for TAB Children's Centre

Local authority	Enfield
Inspection number	364854
Inspection dates	4–5 November 2010
Reporting inspector	Jane Wotherspoon HMI

Centre governance	Trinity at Bowes Methodist Church Trustees
Centre leader	Carren Regis
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school, if applicable	
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Buffer Bears at TAB Centre

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 held meetings with the centre's staff, a representative from the local authority, a trustee from Trinity at Bowes Methodist Church, a member of the advisory board, and representatives from some of the centre's partners. They had informal discussions with parents and users of the services. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation including case studies, a range of key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents and its service plan, and data about the people who use the centre.

Information about the centre

TAB Children's Centre operates from a number of rooms in church buildings in Trinity at Bowes. Although it was designated as a phase one children's centre in 2006 it did not provide a full complement of services until June 2009. The linked childcare, owned and managed by Buffer Bear Ltd, began as a neighbourhood nursery in its current location. It operates from 8am till 6pm each weekday for 52 weeks of the year. A number of health and family support services operate regularly from the centre, although none is based there permanently. Until recently Jobcentre Plus operated from the centre for one day per week. The centre is part of an area partnership with six other children's centres in the south of the borough of Enfield. Some of its services are commissioned directly by the local authority. A partnership board, which includes partners who provide services in the centre and a local authority representative, meets regularly to advise on services. The centre is accountable to the Trustees of the Methodist Church, two of whom sit on the partnership board. At present there is a vacancy for a parent representative on the board. The building is currently undergoing significant remodelling.

The children's centre is located in the Bowes Ward of Enfield close to the border with Haringey. It serves an area that is ethnically, socially and economically diverse, with high levels of deprivation. The largest ethnic groups are Turkish (15.8%), Caribbean

(10.1%) and, increasingly, Eastern European. Bowes Ward has an above-average proportion of children eligible for free school meals and a high proportion of families who speak English as an additional language. Over a quarter of children aged 0–4 years living within the area served by TAB are in households that are dependant on workless benefits. Levels of attainment on entry to early years provision are below those expected for children of this age.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

The centre’s capacity for sustained improvement, including the quality of its leadership and management

3

Main findings

The centre provides a satisfactory range of services that makes a difference to those parents and carers, children and members of the community who use them. In helping users to be healthy and to stay safe the centre’s staff do some good work that has a positive impact on these outcomes. A strong focus on health and safety is underpinned by comprehensive policies that are put into practice effectively. Parents and carers feel safe and well supported. Many see the centre as an inclusive haven where there ‘are no barriers’ and where ‘no-one is turned away’. They receive a friendly welcome from the staff and feel confident that they have someone to turn to when they need help. Staff provide a good level of care, guidance and support, especially for individual families in most need and in times of crisis. Some telling case studies show how staff have supported individual children and families needing specific support and guidance. In such cases good partnerships with services such as child and adolescent mental health services, the educational psychologist service, the local authority’s special educational needs service and staff from Buffer Bear ensure a coordinated approach to the support provided for individual children. However, the centre’s staff and governors know that there is more to do to ensure that partnerships with health services are maximised. In particular, information is not always shared effectively enough so that intervention with families can take place at an early stage.

Other outcomes for users are satisfactory. Although levels of enjoyment are said to be high, generally there are few opportunities for parents to extend their own learning to gain qualifications that would enable them to seek employment. The

impact of the recent loss of Jobcentre Plus from the centre is yet to be seen. The centre's staff and providers seek the views of users through regular evaluations. The centre has been able to meet some requests from users for particular activities such as 'keep fit'. The centre does not have a parents' forum or similar means of gathering the views of users. The centre does not reach those who do not use it currently to find out why they are not taking advantage of its services. Consequently, at present, parents and users have limited input into decisions about the centre's services.

The centre is led and managed satisfactorily. Since her appointment the centre manager has worked hard to extend the limited number and range of activities that were available when she took up her post in 2008. Systems of governance and accountability are clearly understood by all partners. Development planning is satisfactory, as are systems for self-evaluation. However, there is a lack of rigour and sharpness in analysing the data about the people using the centre's services when setting targets for improvement. The centre is beginning to receive better information from the local authority about the community the centre serves and about the centre's contribution to the local authority's outcomes for children and families. There is more to do to analyse this information and to use it to identify which groups need targeted activities. Systems for gathering data have not been in place long enough to enable comparisons from year to year.

To some extent the current building work has curtailed the development of services; all staff and partners associated with TAB are looking forward eagerly to its completion and to the additional facilities that will be available. Nonetheless, the positive views of parents and carers about current services and the staff's commitment to improving what they offer to the community they serve provide a secure platform from which to develop further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Supported and challenged by the local authority, the centre should make better use of data to:
 - evaluate the impact of its provision
 - identify and target provision, such as adult learning, to specific groups
 - set sharp targets when planning how to develop services further.
- Develop partnerships with health services to enable better sharing of information so that partners can provide appropriate support at an early stage.
- Seek ways of gathering users' views and involving them in making decisions about the centre's services.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The centre staff are not always efficient at gathering evidence to show the impact of their work on outcomes for users. Although there is an absence of hard data, evaluations from parents and carers show how much they value and have learnt

about healthy eating from family learning sessions. Cooking sessions are much enjoyed by parents and children alike and are engendering enthusiasm among children for learning to cook, and at least one is now 'starting to help in the kitchen at home'. Ready access to healthy snacks of fresh fruit and water helps to raise children's awareness of choosing healthy options. Good opportunities for outdoor play are built into daily routines in the nursery, but parents and carers attending 'stay and play' would like more opportunities for their children to use the outdoor space. Access to specialist support from child and adolescent mental health services meets the emotional needs of children and families and has had some success in supporting parents in managing their child's behaviour. One parent's evaluation noted that she is 'starting to practice what was learnt and found that it is working'. The centre is aware that, as yet, there are not always enough opportunities for parents to engage in learning activities that lead to qualifications.

Users say they feel safe and welcome the friendly atmosphere in the centre that is reassuring. They find staff approachable and supportive. Childminders attending the weekly sessions find value in sharing ideas and activities that help them provide for the children at home. Parents and carers understand the need for safe and healthy practices while at the centre and there are plenty of visible signs to remind them of the centre's expectations. During national safety week the centre promoted safe practices through visits from the fire brigade and police. Families were given safety equipment for the home. Courses run on accident prevention are helping parents to keep their children safe. Children play happily and show interest in activities on offer in 'stay and play' sessions. These sessions help parents understand how to help their children learn through play. Parents and carers enjoy the opportunity to meet other parents to get informal support and advice and to use different resources. Librarians from the local authority attend 'stay and play' sessions to encourage children and parents to engage with books through stories and rhymes. Children join in enthusiastically, and are gaining confidence and developing communication skills. Users communicate their views regularly after sessions, although too few have opportunities to contribute to decisions about how services might be developed. A recent inspection of the nursery shows that children make satisfactory progress.

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	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	3
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including	3

How good is the provision?

3

The centre has satisfactory systems for assessing the needs of the children and families who use its services. The outreach worker liaises regularly with health visitors to find out about families' needs, and occasionally conducts joint home visits. She publicises the centre's services by dropping leaflets at the local supermarket, local general practitioner (GP) surgeries, and local nurseries, as well as visiting the nearby baby clinic to meet new mothers. The centre would benefit from further information from health workers about new births to enable staff to target families.

Parents and carers attending the centre are pleased with the support they receive. Nonetheless the centre's staff recognise that more needs to be done to reach out to the wider community and to specific groups, such as those who do not speak English and lone parents. The centre provides a satisfactory mix of activities open to all and targeted support for specific groups. The centre provides crèche facilities to enable parents to attend courses. However, participation rates for some courses and sessions are low and/or participants do not complete a full course. Centre staff are not sure why this is so. Evaluations are not always used effectively enough to broaden the range of activities on offer as well as signposting parents to other centres. The summer holiday provision of activities is successful in meeting the needs of the group of parents and childminders with younger school-age children who do not attend activities during school terms. The trip to Margate was a particularly memorable experience for some parents.

The outreach worker offers open sessions of advice and support at which families can seek guidance on a range of needs. The numbers attending vary each week and can be low. Nonetheless, parents are guided regularly to services at other nearby centres and individuals are supported in making and attending appointments with external services and support agencies. Parents and carers of two-year-olds who meet the criteria have been helped to secure funding for a place in the nursery as part of the pilot provision in Enfield. The transition project, run jointly with a child and adolescent mental health worker, targeted support for parents who were unclear about the English education system. The project covered practical aspects about routines and completing forms, but also explored parents' anxieties about separating from their child as they start nursery education.

Several case studies tell of the centre's significant success in meeting the specific needs of individual families and children. This is often achieved through ensuring that services are working together effectively so that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities have the resources and equipment they need to be able to participate in activities.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The centre operates smoothly and provides satisfactory value for money. The two permanent full-time staff members get on well with users and with external partners that use the centre. Partners speak highly of the way that staff facilitate their sessions at the centre. Contractual agreements with external providers are clear and work well, particularly with regard to policies for health and safety. Informal sharing of evaluations between partners offers a useful means to improve services. Systems of governance and accountability are clear and effective. The partnership board, made up of representatives from partners and trustees, contains a good level of expertise. Plans for the church's development of the wider community services, of which the children's centre is part, are ambitious.

Professional supervision is conducted regularly and staff have targets for their work. There is a strong commitment to improving what the centre provides in order to meet the needs of the community. However, monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous so that staff can focus plans and target groups more effectively. Data are not yet robust and not analysed sufficiently to identify needs and target groups. Although staff have a realistic view of what is or is not working well and what could be better, planning for development does not target areas for improvement sharply enough.

Users appreciate the welcoming ethos where all are welcome and 'no-one is turned away'. The range of resources reflects the diversity of the community and informal communication with users supports their participation in events. For example, publicity leaflets are provided in other community languages and the building is accessible to all. Staff have up-to-date training in child protection and domestic abuse and in making referrals under the common assessment framework. This means they are alert to the needs of users. Comprehensive health and safety documentation provides a robust framework for good practice in ensuring that users are safeguarded. Clear procedures for protecting children ensure that information is shared as and when appropriate between agencies. Risk assessments are thorough and staff have been particularly vigilant during building works. Good procedures include appropriate checks on staff and records of checks made on external providers.

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	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	3
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	3
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	3

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

The findings from the inspection of Buffer Bears at TAB Centre, which took place just before the children's centre inspection, contributed to the judgements about the centre. The full report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 TAB Children's Centre on 4 and 5 November 2010. We judged the centre to be satisfactory overall.

During the inspection we held meetings with the centre's staff, representatives from the local authority, a trustee from the Methodist Church at TAB, and some of the centre's partners. We looked at the centre's policies and information about who uses the centre. We were especially pleased to speak with some of you to find out what you think about the centre and the services it provides.

Some of you told us what a difference the centre makes to your lives. You told us that you feel welcome, that 'no-one is turned away' and that there are 'no barriers here'. Many of you told us that you feel safe at the centre. You will not be surprised to learn that inspectors think that staff are good at caring for you and your children. We are pleased with the high priority that the centre gives to health and safety and the way that activities raise your awareness of healthy eating and safety in the home. Some of your comments show how much you value what you have learnt and how much you have enjoyed the cooking sessions with your children.

Staff are also good at giving you advice and finding out information for families. If they do not know the answers to the questions you ask they are able to suggest other services that might be able to help. We heard about some instances of how staff have involved other services to support families when they needed help. The centre's staff and governors want to work more closely with health services so that they can get to know about families who need their services sooner than they do now.

You clearly enjoy the activities that are provided and like the way that sessions such as 'stay and play' help you make contact with other parents and carers and give your children the opportunity to learn to get on with each other. The activities provided in the summer holidays were popular, especially the trip to Margate. We have asked the centre to think about providing other activities and training that will help you to gain qualifications that may help you get a job. The centre's staff ask you for your views about what is provided and, generally, you are very positive. The centre has been able to provide some sessions such as 'keep fit' following suggestions that you have made. We would like the centre to go a bit further than this by involving some of you in making decisions about what the centre provides. We also want them to tell other people about what they can provide and get more people to use the centre. The centre's staff know that some people in the community such as those who do not speak English and those parents and carers who live on their own might need more support. Sometimes the centre puts on activities and not many people turn up.

Since coming to the centre, the centre manager has increased the number of activities and services that are available. But staff are keen to provide even more and better services for families. In order to do this staff need to have more information

from the local authority about the people in the area so that they can plan different activities for different people according to their needs. At the moment plans are not very clear and they do not always have targets to help staff check whether or not they have achieved what they set out to achieve. Staff are not always good at collecting information to show that they have been successful.

Those of you who use the centre regularly will have noticed the building work taking place. Staff have tried to keep things going during this difficult time and everyone is looking forward to having more rooms to use when the building work is finished. Inspectors think that having more rooms can only help the centre develop more in the future.

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