

# Inspection report for The Buttercup Children's Centre

Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	362600
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Reporting inspector	Jackie Krafft HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Vicky O'Riordan
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Kid Ease Nursery- Triangles EY 278153

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.

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## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents and carers, prospective parents and carers and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents and carers, prospective parents and carers 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.

An inspection of the registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one Early Years Inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leadership team, staff, and representatives from the local authority. They also spoke with partner agencies, including from the health service, parents, carers and other users of the centre. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documentation, including key policies, the centre's action plans and evaluations of services.

## Information about the centre

The Buttercup Children's Centre serves a mixed rural and urban community. There are pockets of affluence and parts of the community experience high levels of unemployment as well as social and economic disadvantage. These are identified as amongst the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country. The centre is located in a district with Assisted Area status. It also covers a designated Rural Development Area. Levels of educational attainment are lower than found nationally. Almost all the families in the centre's area are of White heritage. There are increasing numbers of families from Eastern Europe. The Buttercup was designated as a phase 1 centre in 2005 providing the full core offer of childcare and early learning, health and family support services. It is run, on behalf of the local authority, by a network manager who has responsibility for three other centres in the district. Another network manager and a locality coordinator form the centre's senior management team. A working group consists of parents and carers, the centre's management team, statutory, voluntary and community partners. This working group reports to an advisory board which provides advice and assistance to the eight children's centres in the district on behalf of the local authority.

Services are provided in the local community centre and other venues in the community. The centre is used as a base by a wide range of partners who also provide services across the other centres in the district. Childcare and early learning are provided in a privately run nursery offering 96 places from 8am to 6pm daily.

## 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**

**3**

## Main findings

A good range of cohesive services for children and their families is provided by The Buttercup Children's Centre. Strong partnership working with a wide variety of providers, particularly early years settings and health professionals, is making a significant contribution to ensuring the needs of individual users and families are understood and met effectively. As a result, outcomes for users are good. However, partnerships with Jobcentre Plus and further education providers are not yet as well established or helping more users to develop the full range of skills needed for future employment.

Good attention is paid to ensuring users are well cared for and develop a clear understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe. Procedures to safeguard them and support those who are most at risk of harm are effectively implemented by knowledgeable, vigilant and well-trained staff.

The centre's team successfully builds trusting relationships with its users, partners and other local providers who are all positive about what is provided. This is reflected in the words of one user who said, 'The centre has made a real difference to me.' Another stated, 'We drive here especially on a Saturday morning for the Daddy Cool breakfast club.' Users' and partners' views are sought systematically to evaluate the quality of provision and shape the services and activities on offer. They are well represented in the clear governance structure of the centre and feel their views are valued and acted on.

High-quality outreach work and effective one-to-one support, often in families' homes, is making a positive contribution to breaking down barriers, particularly for families who are feeling isolated or who are new to the area. This is reflected in the

increasing numbers of children and families who are accessing the centre's services from a variety of venues in the locality, for example teenage mothers.

High quality resources such as persona dolls are used appropriately to celebrate diversity and are loaned to other local providers. Satisfactory steps are taken to ensure equality of opportunity for users with identified specific needs, including those with disability and those who speak English as an additional language, to enable them to access the full range of services.

Leadership of the centre is good. Leaders at all levels work together diligently to ensure provision and outcomes are good. They have an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths and weaknesses because they constantly seek feedback from users. They are systematic and thorough in analysing and evaluating this information and the limited data they have.

However, they are not yet being provided with timely or sufficient performance data and demographic information by the local authority about all the diverse groups in the area that the centre serves. As a result, their evaluations lack enough rigour, and targets for improvement are not sufficiently ambitious. Consequently, there are some hard-to-reach families who are not yet fully benefiting from the good quality resources, guidance and support available. The quality of the plan for improvement also suffers as a result of this lack of data. For example, the priorities are not centre-specific, nor are there clear indicators of how success in improving outcomes will be measured. The limited information, challenge and support provided by the local authority means that, although the overall effectiveness of the centre is good, its demonstrable capacity for sustained, further improvement is satisfactory rather than good.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- The local authority should strengthen the leadership capacity to improve further by:
  - providing timely, sufficient and robust data to centre leaders
  - supporting leaders at all levels to use this effectively to set ambitious targets and plan robustly for improvement
  - using these to challenge leaders to demonstrate the impact of services on improving outcomes for all groups.
- Strengthen links with Jobcentre Plus and adult education providers to improve the economic well-being of users.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2

Discussions with inspectors and responses to the centre's regular questionnaires and surveys indicate a high level of user satisfaction with services. Users report that they feel less isolated, have more confidence and make new friends because they are emotionally and socially well supported, including those who have experienced domestic violence. Parents and carers say they feel more able to ask questions and are better informed about how to keep themselves and their families healthy. For example, they say that their children are making healthier snack choices of fruit. Data also show that obesity levels across the district have fallen. Parents feel more confident about breastfeeding their babies for longer and are increasingly knowledgeable about how to wean them. Data indicate that there has been an increase in the percentage of babies being breastfed. Parents say they have a better understanding of the health risks of smoking during pregnancy and value the support provided to give up.

Parents and carers report feeling safe and secure at the centre and confident to leave their children in the care of the nursery. They demonstrate a good understanding of how to keep themselves and their children safe at the centre and at home. For example, parents and carers follow the nursery rules by not letting others into the building but waiting for this to be done by a member of staff. An increasing number are taking up the home safety equipment scheme. Parents and carers have a greater understanding of food safety by taking part in an accredited catering course. The centre is able to demonstrate clearly through case study examples that good multi-agency working and a clear understanding of the Common Assessment Framework are helping to keep vulnerable children safe.

Parents and their children enjoy learning and playing together. They report that they have gained a better understanding of how to manage any incidents of challenging behaviour by setting clear boundaries, remaining calm and having the confidence to say 'no'. One explained how bedtimes are better and routines are now in place. Parents explained how they are always given new ideas about how to help their child learn and develop. The recent inspection of the nursery provision reported that learning outcomes for children attending the nursery are good.

Parents and carers say they feel empowered to make a positive contribution to the centre and wider community by becoming volunteers and mentors. They feel encouraged to offer their views and suggestions, and take part in decision making at the regular consultation events. They also contribute through representation on the centre's working group. Users promote the centre's services in the wider community by sharing their views and making presentations to other organisations, for example to a local GP educational event. There has been an increase in the percentage of families accessing the Working Tax Credit. Some users have been supported to write job applications and gain additional qualifications. However, opportunities to develop a wide range of skills such as literacy, numeracy and computer skills to help gain future employment are limited and not yet planned systematically.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>3</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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The centre knows its users well and adapts its services effectively to meet their needs by working closely with other agencies and providers, including in the private and voluntary sectors. For example, the needs of families from Eastern Europe have been identified and a support worker has been funded to help with translating information, accessing services and giving advice on schools, housing and finance. Leaflets for an immunisation programme have been produced in four Eastern European languages and crèche facilities provide for parents and carers so they can attend English language classes. However, provision to develop the future economic well-being of users is not as well developed.

A wide range of community venues are used to provide accessible and enjoyable events, engage users and promote the services that the centre has to offer. The mobile farm and annual teddy bear picnic are popular examples. One parent wrote of an Easter workshop for practitioners, parents and children, 'I didn't realise just how much maths and investigation could come out of a simple Easter egg hunt.' A mini-bus is available to transport users to relevant venues if they need it. The Daddy Cool breakfast club provides a valued opportunity for all male carers to enjoy time with their children when they are not working on a Saturday morning. Activities and services are promoted well through widely distributed, eye-catching newsletters and flyers. The centre is also developing the use of texting and emails to remind users of events and activities. The centre engages well with the wider community. For example, the local Brownies were supported in gaining awards when they helped to develop a sensory and vegetable garden in the nursery. The qualified teacher offers good-quality training, support and advice to local pre-school providers and their parents, often with other professionals such as speech and language therapists.

Good guidance and support are available through leaflets, drop-in sessions, targeted support and signposting to specialist services. Advice is readily available on a wide range of issues which are pertinent to users such as breastfeeding, weaning, debt, financial management, benefits and housing.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

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

## **How effective are the leadership and management?**

**2**

The centre's leaders work very effectively as a team. They have a clear understanding of their different roles and responsibilities so work effectively with statutory and voluntary partners across the wider locality. This helps to secure services and resources that meet users' needs well and so provide good value for money.

Lines of accountability at all levels are understood and there are good induction and supervision arrangements in place. Staff and providers are well trained. Frontline staff are enthusiastic and open to new ideas which benefit the centre's users. They willingly share their expertise and support the training and development of others who are providing services to the community.

A clear communication model ensures there is a shared understanding of reporting and decision-making practices. Representation of partners and parents on the centre's working group and advisory board is good. Members are knowledgeable about the centre's work so provide good support. Although they offer some challenge and review performance against targets where available, this is not yet robust enough to secure sustained improvement. For example, the centre's target of registered families accessing services is regularly exceeded but has not been increased. The information leaders have from the local authority about the centre's performance is not yet enabling them to build their capacity for sustained improvement well.

Leaders promote inclusive practice appropriately by adapting services to meet the different needs of users, including those with disability. All staff are trained appropriately to raise awareness of equality and diversity. However, the plan for

improvement is new and not yet sufficiently focused on the full range of diverse needs in the community.

Safeguarding users is given a high priority. All checks are carried out and thorough records kept, ensuring the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children. Risk assessments are comprehensive and the centre provides a safe environment for its users. Strong relationships, good cooperation and effective procedures for working with a wide range of agencies are making a positive contribution to supporting families experiencing difficulties and children who may be at risk, including those with child protection plans.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>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</b>	<b>2</b>

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

The inspection of the early years and childcare provision in the nursery carried out on 5 October 2010 judged it to be good. Findings from this inspection have contributed to the children's centre report and judgements on outcomes for users and the effectiveness of provision.



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](http://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](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk).

## Summary for centre users

We inspected The Buttercup Children's Centre on 6 and 7 October 2010. We judged the centre as good overall.

Those of you we spoke to told us how much you value the services and activities that your children's centre offers and how they are making a difference to your lives. You explained that you are made to feel welcome, safe and well supported. Some of you said that this is giving you more confidence, helping you to make new friends and giving you ideas about how to help your children learn and develop.

There are a good variety of activities run at the centre, the nursery and other venues in the area. These help you to gain new skills, for example in how to manage your child's behaviour and first aid. Some of you have also been able to gain extra qualifications, although there are not many opportunities to do this. We have asked the centre's leaders to develop this more so that those of you who want to return to work in the future, or are looking for jobs, have more skills and qualifications that might be helpful to you. Activities are made fun, such as the mobile farm, and are also helpful to others in the community. For example, the Brownies were able to gain awards when they helped to develop a sensory and vegetable garden in the nursery.

The centre's leaders are keen to know how you feel about what is on offer and regularly ask you for your thoughts and ideas. They take what you have to say seriously and change the way things are done if they can. For example, the Daddy Cool breakfast club was introduced on a Saturday morning as a result of what you had to say. You are also able to contribute ideas and make suggestions about services and activities through events such as the Teddy Bears' Picnic. You are also represented on the working group that helps to make decisions about what the centre does.

Information about services and activities is advertised well and a mini-bus is provided to help you get to the different venues if you need it. Your centre works well with lots of different organisations and provides some support in your own homes if particularly needed. Good advice and support are also available through drop-in sessions about lots of issues, such as managing money, dealing with debt, housing and health issues. There is a good range of useful leaflets, information sheets and helpful displays in the centre too.

All the staff work well together to make sure everything is well organised, runs smoothly and you know where to go for advice and support when you need it. The centre's leaders regularly look at how effectively your different needs are being met and what needs to improve. They have a plan to help them improve the service but

this plan is not yet detailed enough to be as useful as it could be. The group which is responsible for advising the centre about how to improve is made up of a wide range of people, including representatives from the local authority. They meet regularly to discuss how well the centre is doing.

The centre is well led and providing good services which are making a real difference to you. However, the advisory group and the centre's leaders do not yet have all the information they need to make services even better. So we have asked the local authority to provide them with this. We have also asked the local authority to help the centre's leaders use the information effectively to make sure equally good services are provided to even more families in the community who might need them. This information and support will also help the centre to improve the quality of its action plan which we have asked the leaders to do.

Thank you for contributing to the inspection by talking to us and sharing your views.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).