

Inspection report for Hartcliffe Early Excellence Children's Centre

Local authority	Bristol City Council
Inspection number	362494
Inspection dates	29–30 September 2010
Reporting inspector	Steffi Penny HMI

Centre governance	Nursery School Governing Body
Centre leader	Lynne James
Date of previous inspection	N/A
Centre address	Hareclive Road Hartcliffe Bristol BS13 0JW
Telephone number	01179 038633
Fax number	0117 9038634
Email address	hartcliffearlyyears@bristol.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	N/A
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Hartcliffe Early Years 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 one additional inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre manager, senior leadership team, a member of the governing body, staff and partner agencies, including representatives from the health service. They had informal discussions with parents and children and visited the linked early years provision.

They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hartcliffe is a large, densely populated council estate south of Bristol. Most of the housing is rented accommodation. The estate has a very high rate of unemployment and single parent households. The centre serves a community that experiences high levels of social and economic disadvantage, being located in an area in the top 10% of the most deprived wards in the country. Traditionally most families are of White British heritage and there is a small, but increasing, number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds.

The centre received Centre of Excellence status from the Department for Education and Skills in 1999. The centre is based in a purpose-built two-storey building that opened in November 2006. In conjunction with other agencies the centre provides fully integrated multi-professional services, including early learning, family support, health and childminder network support. Drop-in sessions are delivered at other settings in the area (Bridge Learning Campus, Fulford centre). Childcare is provided through the nursery, the regular crèche and adult and toddler sessions held at the centre. A separate report for this provision can be viewed at www.ofsted.gov.uk. Governance of the centre is provided through the governors of the nursery and is made up of staff, providers and users who attend the children's centre.

More than half of the families attending the centre are entitled to free school meals and a high number of families in employment claim working tax credit. Applications for children in need places far outstrip the availability of places at the centre and the numbers of children with additional special educational needs attending the centre is very high, usually around a third of the intake each year. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are below expectations for their 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

1

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

1

Main findings

Overall, Hartcliffe Children’s Centre is outstanding. The centre is highly effective in its ability to sustain and improve the lives of families as they find it easy to access all agencies under one roof in a highly supportive and exceedingly welcoming environment.

Safeguarding has the highest priority at the centre. The procedures, services and partnerships to ensure the emotional health and safety of users exemplify best practice and have led to impressive improvements to family well-being. A relative weakness is family physical health, which is good rather than outstanding. The reason for this is the lack of families’ learning about, and access to making, nutritional meals on a budget.

The centre’s own evaluations, and recent and past Ofsted inspections, show that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make outstanding progress. So do many of their parents because of the excellent encouragement and support provided for them to be able to undertake training courses.

Partnership work, particularly with health professionals, is exemplary and ensures that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are identified early, with highly effective support rapidly put in place. Excellent provision is also made for those families that the centre and its partners have recognised as having circumstances that make them vulnerable. The inclusion of all children and families is promoted exceptionally well and discrimination is effectively tackled.

Centre staff are highly adaptable and are able to offer flexible provision for families. This is based on excellent assessment of individual needs. The centre carefully evaluates the impact of each activity and individual service provided. With this information and the wide range of evaluations from users, the centre and governors have an accurate understanding of the progress the centre is making towards achieving the challenging targets that have been set by them. Overall governance and the use of resources are good. Although strong links exist between strategic planning, management and provision, the governors do not have sufficient training to be able to hold the centre to account better for the use of its facilities.

Morale is exceptionally high among all staff and their views, like those of centre users and service providers, are highly valued. Action plans are driven by ambitious targets with full consultation with all who are involved with the centre. Everyone's voice is heard and their expertise utilised. Given the sustained successes, the shared ambition and drive, and effective action planning, the centre has excellent capacity to build on its outstanding provision and further improve outcomes.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority and the centre should ensure that governors have more training so that they are in a better position to hold the centre to account over the use of physical resources.

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Overall outcomes for centre users are excellent. When at the centre, children readily adopt healthy lifestyles and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of interesting outdoor facilities. They eat healthy snacks during the day and benefit from nutritious freshly cooked food at lunchtimes. Nearly all aspects of family health are excellent due to the close involvement of health professionals in and with the centre.

Adults and children are safe and protected when at the centre. Children on the child with a child protection plan, those involved with the Common Assessment Framework processes, children in need and/or looked after children are extremely well cared for. Meetings are regularly held at the centre and these ensure that all partners are kept well informed and fully involved. Because of this support, these children make excellent progress, as do their peers, in all of the Every Child Matters outcomes and are ready and excited to attend school at the appropriate time.

Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are equally well supported. The need for separate appointments at the hospital is radically reduced because children and their families meet with health professionals at the centre, along with their key workers. Health professionals said it improved diagnosis as children could

be seen one-to-one, and with their peers. They also said that family attendance rates were considerably higher than at the hospital. Sometimes this is because getting to the hospital is rather difficult. Parents said it was also due to the ethos of the centre and that the key workers play an active role in supporting parents at these meetings. One parent noted, 'It has given us an independence away from the hospital as we are able to see the physiotherapist, paediatrician, occupational therapist and speech and language therapist at the centre.' Parents said they appreciated and highly valued the support that their key worker provides. In turn, the key workers get a rounded understanding of what each child's needs are. They use this knowledge to adapt centre courses and activities as well as helping families understand future options.

Children play together in harmony; they show respect for one another as they share and take turns in their play. They demonstrate appreciation for their environment, helping tidy away the toys at the end of a session. Their behaviour is exemplary. They develop an excellent range of skills for the future. For example, there are lots of conversations with staff at lunchtimes, using augmented communication techniques, which increase the self-confidence of children in expressing themselves.

Parents and their children are gaining significant social skills and confidence through a wide range of activities, with follow-up work to try at home to aid learning and parenting skills. Users are overwhelmingly supportive of the centre and all that it does because they are actively involved in decision-making at all levels.

Families benefit hugely from the range of training that is available at the centre. Case studies and the qualifications obtained by adults show that these opportunities lead to the enhancement of parents' ability to improve their economic and social well-being, enhancing family life and breaking cycles of deprivation and substance misuse.

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	1
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	1
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	1
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	1

How good is the provision?

1

Provision is excellent. The 'One Stop Shop' approach at the centre provides access to a broad range of services and opportunities, in addition to nursery education and day care. It is integrated, personalised and responsive, following an effective assessment of needs, with an emphasis on the whole family. The centre meets its aims to deliver its services around the needs of children and families rather than around professional or service boundaries. The extensive range of facilities and resources at the centre are of high quality and are up to date. There are missed opportunities for advertising the availability of the soft play area, sensory room and computer suite.

For children, there is lots of physical and outdoor play all year round, with an excellent range of experiences in all six areas of learning. Great care is taken over children's emotional well-being. It is assessed by staff at regular intervals and action taken to make improvements where needed, which are subsequently evaluated.

Outstanding partnerships with users, other agencies and services help provide an excellent range of programmes of educational study and personal development for parents and carers. Users of the centre are overwhelmingly supportive of all its work and say they are extremely pleased with centre services.

The quality of care, guidance and support for children and families is exceptional. Excellent relationships with families enable staff to understand their needs and how best to respond to them. The outreach workers successfully encourage the most hard-to-access members of the community to engage with the centre. Their close links with midwives help to ensure that the centre is aware of forthcoming births, especially for teenage mums. The importance of home visiting and the taking of services to some families have been instrumental to the centre's success in breaking down barriers of isolation and have encouraged more families to attend the centre. This is due to the high levels of trust that are built, the increased levels of confidence of the user and the homely environment created by the centre.

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	1
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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

1

Leadership and management are consistently good at all levels and excellent in nearly all aspects. The integration and co-location with the nursery school is a key strength in the leadership and direction of the centre. Peer review and support ensures that managers at different levels take effective responsibility for quality assurance. Governance arrangements are very well established. Members of the governing body receive reports from key members of staff on a regular basis to raise their awareness of the centre's work and developments. They also undertake 'learning walks' where they rightly ask pertinent questions to challenge and support the work of the centre. They hold the centre to account extremely well in terms of family support, education and the Every Child Matters outcomes. They are less assertive with regard to maximising the use of physical resources, for example the frequency of the use of the soft play area, the sensory room and the computer suite and the lack of access to family cooking facilities.

Improvement and inclusion for all are at the heart of the ethos of the centre. Significantly more hard-to-reach groups attend the Hartcliffe centre than others covering the same post code area. For example, the 'Fathers' Group' has an outstanding impact on fathers' sense of well-being due to well-planned sessions and the networking opportunity for fathers who continue to meet socially off-site. Other knock-on impacts have been that other fathers feel more comfortable at the centre because they said they know about the fathers' groups and that men are welcome. They, as with other users at the centre, felt they were not pre-judged.

Very robust systems are in place for ensuring all adults who come into contact with children, or vulnerable adults, have undergone Criminal Records Bureau and recruitment checks. Extremely rigorous monitoring of children's well-being is conducted and all adults working at the centre have a thorough knowledge of procedures to follow in the event of child protection concerns. The exceptionally good relationships and operational systems between the centre and its partners ensure that early interventions happen and information-sharing procedures and protocols are in place, which eliminates risks further and identifies any action which needs to be taken.

Evaluation leading to improvement is a core element of the centre. Special reports are created by external services, related specifically to the work they have done at this centre, and the high quality impact of this work is clearly and comprehensively evidenced. Early in 2010 the centre also commissioned an external evaluation of the impact of its own work on the outcomes for children and parents. The centre used the results of this report, along with its own evaluations, to successfully sustain and improve its work with those families who are most vulnerable due to their circumstances.

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	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	1
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	1
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	1

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

None

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 Hartcliffe Early Excellence children's centre on 29–30 September 2010. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

During our visit we looked at the centre's plans and documents and talked with a number of you and the professionals who work with you. Many of you went out of your way to tell us how much you enjoy the activities provided through the centre. Those of you who spoke to us said that your children's centre is a friendly and welcoming place, and that you would rather wait for a place in the nursery at Hartcliffe than go anywhere else.

Your centre is part of the core of the community and is relied upon for the well-being of large numbers of people. Lynne's excellent leadership and her dedicated team have provided families with a wide range of superb services that are carefully adapted to meet their particular needs.

Staff at your children's centre provide excellent levels of care, guidance and support for all those who use it. Those of you who spoke with us reported that they felt the centre helped to improve their self-confidence and improved their lives, particularly younger parents and fathers. We were impressed with how well the centre supports families who have members with special educational needs and/or disabilities. With its partners the centre uses resources carefully to help those families who are most in need of support.

You and your children are safe at the centre due to the excellent risk assessments and robust policies and procedures. You also told us that you feel able to share any concerns with staff. We found that the centre is excellent at helping families at times in their lives when they most need it. The centre does this by making sure action is taken quickly and that different people and organisations can work well as a team to support both children and families.

To develop further the work of the centre, we have asked the centre and the local authority to improve the way that governors are trained so that they can be even better at holding the managers and leaders at the centre to account.

We would like to thank those of you who spared the time to speak with us and were willing to share your thoughts and feelings about the centre. We can see why the staff love working with you every day. We wish all of you and your families the very best for the future.

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