

Inspection report for Brinnington Children's Centre

Local authority	Stockport
Inspection number	366623
Inspection dates	16–17 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Rachael Flesher HMI

Centre governance	Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Centre leader	Kim Boughey
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Westmorland Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY399588 Brinnington Children's Centre Playgroup EY348749 Brinnington out-of-school club EY295787 Brown Bear at St Bernadettes

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 parents and carers, centre staff and representatives from professional partnerships, the advisory board and the local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Brinnington Children's Centre is situated on a shared site with Westmorland Primary School, in the suburb of Brinnington in the north-east of Stockport, Greater Manchester. It serves a community living in the 5% most deprived areas in the country. Families face issues of poor housing conditions, low levels of basic skills and high levels of unemployment, social deprivation, drug and alcohol misuse, crime and domestic violence. The large majority of families in the centre's reach area are predominantly White British with a small percentage of families from minority ethnic groups. Families move in and out of the area more frequently than is usual. The proportion of children who speak English as an additional language is below the national average.

The children's centre has evolved from an Early Years Centre and maintained nursery school. The Nursery class is now managed by Westmorland Primary School and based in the children's centre building where the children have access to both shared and sole use of space. The full day-care element of the provision is provided at the nearby Neighbourhood Nursery, Brown Bears, which is based at St Bernadette's Primary School. Brinnington Children's Centre offers sessional childcare through a 16-place playgroup, and a crèche is provided to support parents accessing the centre services and activities. Children enter the early years provision with skills that are

much lower than those typically expected for their age, particularly in relation to speech and language, and behaviour.

Brinnington Children’s Centre has its own advisory board, which is made up of representatives from various professional partnerships and the local community, parents and carers, and centre staff. The children’s centre is governed by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council. The centre provides the full core offer.

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

The overall effectiveness of Brinnington Children’s Centre is outstanding. Safeguarding is given utmost priority and staff, users and partners are fully aware of their responsibilities to protect children and promote their welfare. Extremely effective and rigorous policies and procedures are in place to ensure the safety and health of all users, staff and services. Staff are confident to follow procedures and skilled in identifying any issues and swiftly referring to other agencies where necessary. Leaders, staff and partners are confident that vulnerable families in the area are being identified and supported early.

The children’s centre provides an extremely friendly and calming environment where everyone receives a warm and personal welcome. Users told inspectors that the centre is like a ‘home from home’ and has a ‘caring ethos’ where staff ‘never judge, they just help’. Equality and diversity is fully promoted and the centre takes appropriate action to tackle discrimination and remove any barriers to access. Users enjoy coming to the centre and highly value the high quality activities and services provided. They told inspectors that there is a ‘massive community spirit’ and the children’s centre has successfully established itself at the heart of the community.

The leadership and management of the centre are outstanding. The performance of staff, and their professional development are managed extremely well resulting in staff who are empowered and highly motivated. Leaders and staff demonstrate great tenacity in their drive to achieve challenging goals. They are always striving to do things even better, using robust systems to self-evaluate their performance and drive

improvement. As a result, team morale is extremely high and there is an air of infectious enthusiasm in the centre, where, as one member of staff told inspectors, 'Everyone walks around with a smile on their face'.

The centre has worked hard to develop partnerships with a wide range of professionals, which has greatly improved the provision. All partners share the centre's passion and commitment to making a difference to children and their families in the community. Partners are fully committed to inter-agency working and highly value the strong partnerships developed through the children's centre both with key services and parents and carers. This ensures the needs of the children, families and the wider community are met and their protection assured. However, some key partners do not have efficient systems in place to share information on a regular basis to help the centre identify target groups, and the percentage of different groups with whom the children's centre has established contact. The centre relies on the professionals linked to the children's centre to gather and provide this information themselves causing unnecessary work for front line staff. Partners are proud to work with the centre and of the results they have gained in dramatically improving the life chances of parents, carers and children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. Children and families make excellent progress in all outcomes, often while facing the most challenging of circumstances.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop efficient systems to securely identify target groups across the children's centre reach area, and the proportions of different groups with whom the children's centre has established contact by:
 - all key partners taking responsibility for regularly gathering, analysing and sharing robust information with the children's centre (the local authority).

How good are outcomes for users?

1

Health professionals report that the children's centre has made a big impact on achieving the overall primary health goals of the reach area and is reducing mental health issues as well as general health issues. Health professionals are fully integrated into the centre and this has increased families' accessibility to universal services resulting in higher attendance rates. As one midwife told inspectors, 'Parents would rather come here than the clinic', and parents often drop in to see the midwife when they know she is on site. Mothers state they have continued to breastfeed

because of the breastfeeding support group. Support for those wishing to stop smoking is excellent and the importance of smoke-free homes is promoted to families to reduce health risks to babies and children. The Health Trainer has worked in excellent partnership with the children's centre staff to engage and support parents and carers who have emotional and mental health issues, one of the centre's key targets. The centre fully promotes healthy lifestyles with many users developing healthy eating habits as a result. The 'Growing Families' project provides superb opportunities for children, young people, and parents and carers in the area to be outdoors and to grow, harvest and consume their own produce in the centre's allotment. Parents and carers also thoroughly enjoy the 'Cook your way to health' and 'cook and taste' sessions.

The children's centre is an extremely safe and secure environment where the safety and well-being of all users is given utmost priority. Children subject to a child protection plan or Common Assessment Framework processes are extremely well supported due to the highly effective multi-agency team approach. Parents and carers feel fully informed about what the centre is doing to promote their families' welfare and safety. As one parent told inspectors, 'They work with you, even when they have concerns about your child. They explain things and don't go behind your back.' The centre supports families facing issues of domestic violence extremely well, providing a safe place to access support and advice. One parent commented that, 'I wouldn't be safe now if it wasn't for the children's centre.'

Children and parents and carers are developing an excellent understanding of dangers and how to keep themselves safe. For example, a superb outdoor play area has been developed specifically to promote road safety as this is a key issue in the area. One parent told inspectors, 'Here is the only place my child gets to play outside because I know it's safe. I feel safer here than at home.' Family support workers advise on home safety and support users to access equipment to help reduce accidents in the home. Parents and carers are also developing their parenting skills extremely well due to the support they receive from the centre, both at home and in the groups provided. Children behave exceptionally well and are developing positive relationships.

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress from their starting points in developing the skills that will help them in the future. Parents and carers said that their 'children have come on in leaps and bounds' and that the centre 'caters for every child's needs'. Schools report that children are very well prepared for school and get off to a flying start. The work the children's centre has done to promote better outcomes for children in their communication, language and literacy skills has had a significant impact on their development and achievements. The centre also provides much-valued pilot places for two-year-olds which has enabled the most vulnerable children to access early years provision at an earlier stage and this has made a significant impact on their outcomes.

Parents and carers who have been hard to engage report that they have had a

positive experience with the centre and that it has had a positive impact on their lives. Users spoke about how the centre has supported them to develop economic stability and access courses. They also commented that they now have more self-esteem and confidence in their capabilities. The centre identifies next steps to build on their learning and development and raises aspirations, with many accessing further training, work experience and employment as a result.

The centre places great importance on ensuring users are consulted meaningfully and their views listened to and used to shape services. They do this extremely successfully through the centre's 'Parents voice' strategy with users feeling valued as the centre communicates the changes they have made through 'You said, we did' displays.

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	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

All centre staff, key partners and the local authority have an in-depth understanding of the issues facing the families living in their community. The centre has formed innovative approaches to successfully identify the needs of the community, prioritising targets and taking concerted action to meet these needs; for example, developing sub-groups of the advisory board which involve key professionals working together to tackle issues. This is greatly aided by the extremely effective partnerships the centre has worked hard to develop with a range of professionals to share information and support the families in their area. Most professionals are gathering and sharing data directly with the centre to help them establish their target groups and the proportions of different groups with whom the children's centre has established contact. However, these systems are not fully developed at a strategic level to ensure the data are supplied efficiently and regularly enough. Rigorous multi-agency assessments ensure services are tailored to suit individual child and families needs.

The provision to help children learn and develop both indoors and outdoors is outstanding. The principles of the Early Years Foundation Stage are embedded across all groups attended by babies and children to ensure high quality and individualised purposeful learning. The playgroup is highly valued by parents who state their children are more confident, and are making excellent progress supported by the 'wonderful staff' who are 'nurturing'. Assessments made by the centre are shared with the school the child moves onto, along with any other important information gathered, to ensure every child receives the support they need as soon as they start. This ensures all children have the best start in school.

The quality and range of activities and services provided are excellent and meet the needs of all users extremely well. These activities and services are provided by a range of professionals and high quality volunteers and are highly valued by users; for example, the very popular 'Let's sew' and 'Make, do and mend' sessions run by an extremely passionate and committed volunteer. Users told us they find these sessions calming and therapeutic, and they are developing their skills, reducing social isolation and building their confidence. Activities and services are flexible and adapted to needs, thereby encouraging high participation rates by the target groups of users. Provision is delivered from a range of venues in the area to increase accessibility and attendance. The Parental Engagement Worker is extremely successful in reaching out and engaging those who are socially isolated and hard to reach, in the centre and services.

The centre clearly plans for the next steps of all users accessing groups and courses to keep them engaged and ensure progression. This is based on the needs and opinions of the users that are routinely gathered and used to ensure services are matched to their needs. Achievements by all users are meaningfully celebrated.

The care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community are of extremely high quality. Personalised support, provided through outreach services and the Child and Family Workers, is excellent. A great deal of time is taken to develop trusting relationships to encourage engagement. Parents and carers comment on how perceptive staff at the centre are to signs of any issues or problems they and their families may be facing. Users are confident to turn to the centre in times of crisis and are fully supported, as reflected in comments such as, 'If I'm struggling this is where I come. I've had all sorts of help', and, 'It doesn't matter what the problems are, they can always help. They know everything here.' The outstanding quality, coordination and range of guidance and support empower families to improve their outcomes. This has had a significant impact on developing the well-being of families across the area.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents	1
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and other users	
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

Governance and accountability arrangements are very well established and understood by all. Excellent monitoring and evaluating processes are in place at a strategic and centre level. The advisory board and sub-groups include an extremely wide range of representatives and play a key part in the centre's success in achieving its aims and objectives, shaping services and developing highly effective partnerships.

Leaders are highly effective in communicating high expectations to all staff and users. The centre has adopted a coaching style of leadership which has empowered staff to find solutions to drive improvement. Staff told us they feel supported, valued, trusted and listened to. The centre is innovative, takes on challenges and is seen by the local authority as a leader in quality practice and provision. Many systems developed by the centre have been adopted by the local authority and disseminated as quality systems for all children's centres in Stockport to use. The local authority also uses the centre to pilot new systems and projects due to the quality of the centre's leadership team, and the strong foundations on which to trial a new way of working.

Robust arrangements are in place to ensure all staff and other professionals delivering services from the centre are suitable to have access to children. Parents and carers are fully informed of the centre's policy on protecting children. The centre fully engages with the prevention strategy and locality working and uses the Common Assessment Framework well. Staff are well trained in child protection and safeguarding: the Children and Family Workers have a wide range of expertise that the centre fully utilises to develop their practice and provision. There are also extremely strong links and information sharing with social care to ensure vulnerable children are identified and supported accordingly. As a result, the safeguarding of children is improving, including children from families who are hard to engage. The inclusion of all families and children is exemplary and fully promoted in all aspects of the centre's provision to ensure the diverse needs of children and their families are supported with equal concern.

Resources are used and managed extremely efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community. The centre leader ensures the centre is

sustainable and provides excellent value for money. This is achieved by accessing funding streams, sourcing free resources, recruiting high quality volunteers and developing partnerships with a wide range of services; for example, working with the Young Offenders Service to develop the excellent outdoor provision. This has also led to excellent outcomes for the young offenders involved in the project. Users of the centre are involved in developing resources to be used in the centre, for example, the highly utilised story sacks. Staff are very well deployed and resources and accommodation are shared with a range of services. Partners state that being based within the centre has increased accessibility to their service by families.

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	1
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	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

Childcare and a crèche facility are provided on site through the Brinnington Children’s Centre Playgroup and are an integral part of the children’s centre. As the provision was not inspected at the same time as the children’s centre the previous inspection report was taken into account.

The full day-care element of the provision is provided at the nearby Neighbourhood Nursery, Brown Bear, based at St Bernadettes Primary School. As the provision was

not inspected at the same time as the children's centre, the previous inspection report was taken into account.

The children's centre is on the site of Westmorland Primary School. The Early Years Foundation Stage class is managed by the school and based in the children's centre building. The school was not inspected at the same time as the children's centre therefore the previous inspection report was taken into account. Brinnington Out-of-School Club is managed by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council and based on the site of Westmorland Primary School. The out-of-school club was not inspected at the same time as the children's centre therefore the previous inspection report was taken into account.

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 Brinnington Children's Centre on 16 and 17 February 2011. We judged the centre as outstanding overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. We found your children's centre to be very welcoming and friendly. It provides an extremely calming environment where everyone receives a warm and personal welcome. You told us the centre is like a 'home from home' and has a 'caring ethos' where staff 'never judge, they just help'. You told us there is a 'massive community spirit' and the children's centre has successfully established itself at the heart of the community. We agree. Your centre is managed very well and all involved share a commitment to making a difference to children and their families in the community, always striving to do things even better. This is achieved through professionals working extremely well together to support you.

Everyone understands the needs of your community extremely well and professionals share information to ensure the needs are correctly identified and addressed. However, some key partners are not regularly sharing information directly with the centre to help identify target groups and the percentage of different groups with whom the children's centre has established contact. The local authority has been asked to improve this.

Your centre successfully supports you through the many challenges you and your families face, greatly improving your circumstances. You told us that you enjoy coming to the centre and highly value the high quality activities and services provided for you and your families. You told us that you now have more self-esteem and confidence in your capabilities and aspirations for the future. Many of you have accessed further training, work experience and employment as a result. This is a fantastic achievement.

The centre invests considerable time in developing trusting relationships with you to encourage you to engage in the centre's activities and services. You told us how perceptive staff are to signs of any issues or problems you may be facing and you are confident to turn to the centre in times of crisis and feel supported. You said, 'If I'm struggling this is where I come. I've had all sorts of help'. 'It doesn't matter what the problems are they can always help. They know everything here.'

The centre places great importance on ensuring you are consulted meaningfully and your views listened to and used to shape services. They do this extremely successfully through the centre's 'Parents voice' strategy. The centre communicates the changes they have made through 'You said, we did' displays, which you told us help you feel valued and listened to.

The children's centre is an extremely safe and secure environment where your safety and well-being are given utmost priority. One parent told us, 'Here is the only place my child gets to play outside because I know it's safe. I feel safer here than at home.' You told us you feel fully informed about what the centre is doing to promote your families welfare and safety. As one of you told us, 'They work with you, even when they have concerns about your child. They explain things and don't go behind your back.' The centre supports those of you facing issues of domestic violence extremely well providing a safe place to access support and advice. Another user told us that 'I wouldn't be safe now if it wasn't for the children's centre'.

Children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make outstanding progress from their starting points for developing the skills that will help them in the future. You told us your 'children have come on in leaps and bounds' and that the centre 'caters for every child's needs'. Schools report that children are very well prepared for school and get off to a flying start. This is excellent and must continue to ensure your children get the best start in life.

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