

Inspection report for Bestwood Park and Top Valley Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottingham City
Inspection number	366419
Inspection dates	16–17 February 2011
Reporting inspector	Keith Williams AI

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Corina Ioannou
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Westglade Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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 two additional inspectors.

The inspectors held meetings with the service manager, head of centre, staff, representatives of the local authority, health workers and members of the advisory board.

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

Information about the centre

Bestwood Park and Top Valley Children's Centre is a phase two children's centre that serves an area of high deprivation in which levels of worklessness and the proportion of families on benefits are high. Most families are from White British backgrounds. When children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage, their knowledge and skills are well below those expected. The centre is governed by the local authority and makes the full core offer. It works closely with Bestwood and Leen Valley Children's Centre, and the two centres share a service manager, team manager and advisory board.

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

2

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



Main findings

The centre serves the needs of its community well. A key strength is the high quality care, guidance and support provided for all of its users. This is based on a detailed understanding of the reach area, its families and their needs, and is reflected in the centre's warm, welcoming environment. The centre is well led and managed by the service manager and team manager. They, and the skilled staff, use their local knowledge to identify the needs of potentially vulnerable families and tailor services to users' individual needs. This is enhanced by excellent inter-agency work by expert professionals. As a result, the centre makes a clear difference to the lives of children and their families. Safeguarding is given a high priority. Good steps are taken to assess the risk of activities and procedures are robust and rigorous. As a result, parents, carers and children feel safe in the setting. The centre's commitment to providing a safe, attractive environment and to meeting users' individual needs are appreciated by parents and carers, one of whom said of staff, 'They are never too busy for you.'

Leaders monitor the centre's work closely and are well supported by the local authority in identifying how they can improve. Self-evaluation is accurate and challenging targets are set and usually met. Data are becoming increasingly available to the centre to help their evaluation, although leaders do not measure and celebrate specific improvement from year to year. In addition, the analysis of data is not precise enough to enable staff to check on the impact of the centre's programmes and other services. Nevertheless, staff work well to promote positive outcomes for children and their families. The centre's success in meeting users' needs shows that it has good capacity for sustained improvement. Leaders have rightly recognised that some health indicators are proving harder to improve, particularly in relation to initiating and sustaining breastfeeding and reducing smoking amongst pregnant women. Plans are in hand to tackle this, including impending involvement in the local authority's 'Baby Friendly' initiative.

Diversity is celebrated well and users of all backgrounds are welcomed and fully included. Users report that they feel their views are valued and taken into account. The centre has begun to put its consultation with users on a more formal footing by re-establishing its parents' forum. The involvement of groups of users who are potentially vulnerable through their circumstances is monitored closely. Those who are hard to reach are identified and appropriate steps are taken to increase their engagement. The centre is particularly successful in engaging fathers and grandfathers.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Make better use of data to evaluate the impact of the centre's work, celebrate

success, identify what can be improved and make comparisons from year to year.

- Provide further opportunities for initiating and sustaining breastfeeding and reducing smoking during pregnancy.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Users have good access to activities that improve their health and that of their children. Case studies built up by the centre's staff, and other evaluations, show that opportunities for family learning are having a positive impact on outcomes. Immunisation rates are high and a particular strength is the successful support provided for users' mental health. Outcomes relating to smoking during pregnancy and breastfeeding are proving harder to improve. Regular events, including healthy barbeques, sessions for teenage parents and the 'Busy Feet' programme for children aged three and over, promote healthy lifestyles well. Children have regular access to the attractive, interesting and exciting outdoor area and they enjoy their time outdoors very much. All users, including those families with children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, benefit from integrated services.

Thorough risk assessments ensure that activities at the centre and trips out are safe. Appropriate steps are taken to promote safety in the home. Supervision by staff and parents and carers during activities is assiduous and children behave well. Staff are well trained in health, safety and child protection matters. Families whose circumstances make them vulnerable have their needs assessed thoroughly through the Common Assessment Framework and, where child protection plans are in place, excellent multi-agency work ensures good support for these children. Families are signposted to the most appropriate support, either at the centre or at the nearby access centre. Regular events, including the successful 'child safety week', fire safety advice from the local fire service and seasonal topics such as 'safe sun', contribute to parents' and carers' good understanding of how to stay safe and that of their children.

Parents and carers report that they and their children enjoy attending the centre. Children are inquisitive and messy activities are particularly popular. Users improve their skills and confidence through regular courses, training and activities, such as the 'stay and play' and 'parent, baby and toddler' groups. Sessions such as 'ready, steady, go!' aimed at two- to three-year-olds, help to prepare children well for nursery. The centre's records show that children's knowledge and skills when they enter the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving and, although they remain well below those expected, the gap between the lowest achieving children and their peers is closing.

The centre has worked effectively to encourage parents and carers to become well-trained volunteers. Following training, a good number remain as volunteers or move into further training or employment. They also contribute to the centre by joining the parents' forum or advisory board, although both are newly convened and are not yet fully operational. The centre promotes users' understanding of the wider world and

celebrates cultural events such as Chinese New Year. Links with organisations such as Jobcentre Plus help provide them with financial management skills.

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	2
The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	2
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	2

How good is the provision?

2

One of the centre's key strengths is the skilled and accurate assessment of users' needs using, to great effect, information provided by other professionals and local intelligence. This results in a very individualised approach through the tight co-ordination of a wide range of guidance, advice and other services. Users express great satisfaction that the centre does all it can to assess and meet their needs. The good range of activities successfully promotes purposeful learning and enjoyment and encourages many parents and carers to seek further training or employment. The children's centre teachers have a good understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The planning relates to each of the areas of learning and provides well for specific groups of learners. The achievements of adults and children alike are celebrated well, for example through displays in the centre and the highly regarded 'Bestwood Achievers' presentation evening.

Participation among the centre's target groups is generally good. Staff have successfully increased the involvement of young parents, lone parents and families from workless households, for example, and the number of fathers and grandfathers who attend activities and training has increased. This is due, in no small part, to the staff's willingness to listen to, and act upon, suggestions made by users. As a result, users feel that the centre provides well for their needs. Providing high quality, well targeted care, guidance and support is at the heart of the centre's work. Support for families in crisis is exceptionally strong and there are striking examples of where the centre has made a significant contribution to the welfare of families in times of great need. Family and parenting support is very strong and includes thoughtful and sensitive outreach services. Advice and guidance, through leaflets and attractive displays, are plentiful and, because staff know the users well, users are signposted to the services that best meet their needs. Individual advice, for example, on accessing

benefits or seeking employment, is very well-tailored, uses external services exceptionally well and often enables the recipients to overcome significant barriers to their learning and personal development.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	1
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	2
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	2
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?

2

The service manager and head of centre have high expectations of the way that users' needs will be met and provide good role models for staff in their day-to-day work. The well qualified and experienced staff share the leaders' ambitions for the centre. They are committed to reaching targets and fulfilling the centre's aims and priorities. Their roles are clearly defined, there is a strong sense of teamwork and morale is high. Partnership work is highly effective and makes a very strong contribution to improving outcomes for users. At the heart of this success is the high level of commitment to working together to secure the best for the local community, with the children's centre at its hub. This results in highly integrated and cohesive approach to providing services for children and adults.

The local authority provides good strategic direction for the centre and holds leaders to account through its annual conversation, regular evaluations and target setting. The advisory board is representative of the local community but, because it was established relatively recently, its role as an independent body that can challenge decisions and review targets is limited. Nevertheless, it has already formed a clear view of its function and how it can help improve provision. Accurate self-evaluation is underpinned by an excellent understanding of the reach area, although the precise use of data to measure the impact of the centre's work is at an early stage. Arrangements for the supervision of staff are well organised and contribute effectively to identifying and meeting staff training needs.

Safeguarding arrangements are well managed. All of the necessary checks on the suitability of adults to work with children, including authorisation from external agencies, are made and recorded diligently. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection, health and safety and are suitably qualified in administering first aid. Staff are vigilant about the importance of early intervention and any issues are resolved quickly through multi-agency work. Arrangements for fire safety are good and the centre's records show impressive evacuation times. Careful checks are made of

potential risks presented by activities and trips, although users' views are not yet taken fully into account when risks are reviewed.

The centre provides good value for money and ensures that good-quality resources are made available to its users. Indoor and outdoor facilities are attractive and, although indoor space is tight, sessions are well organised and thoroughly prepared. Staff make very good use of all the available areas. They work well to ensure equality and to promote diversity, and they provide an appropriate range of resources that celebrate a variety of cultures. Parents and carers report that they feel fully included and there have been successful attempts to engage hard to reach groups. A newly convened parents' forum is formalising the centre's consultation with users and has already led to some changes in provision. For example, the forum identified the need to make the parent-led 'stay and play' sessions more accessible, and this resulted in moving the sessions to a different day.

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	2
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	2
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	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	1
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

The inspectors considered information about Westglade Primary School.

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 Bestwood Park and Top Valley Children's Centre on 16-17 February 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We would like to thank those of you who spoke to us during the two days. You were very helpful. All of you were very positive about your experiences at the centre. In particular, you told us that you and your children enjoy coming to the centre and feel happy and safe there. Some of you told us how much you appreciate that staff listen to you when you have a problem and that the help they give you makes a difference. We could see for ourselves how much your children enjoy using the attractive and welcoming facilities and we were pleased to hear that they particularly enjoy messy play! Leaders and staff are good at encouraging you to volunteer or offer your views, and the new parents' forum is beginning to make the gathering of your opinions more organised.

The activities that the staff provide are well planned and of good quality and they provide a good range of sessions and programmes. As a result, children are prepared well for the next stages of their learning and development. The centre is good at helping you and your children to celebrate your achievements, for example through the 'Bestwood Achievers' presentation evening. We know how proud you are when you are nominated.

There are some outstanding features to the work the centre is doing. The staff provide excellent care, guidance and support. They assess your needs very well, which means they understand how best to help you. One of the reasons they are so successful is because a wide range of agencies work exceptionally well together, either to give you support, or point you in the direction of where you can get it.

The local authority does a good job of checking on the centre's work and helping it to improve. Even though your centre is good, the leaders and staff are determined to make it even better. We have asked them to do two things. The leaders already evaluate their work well, but we want them to make better use of the information the local authority gives them, so that they can measure how well different activities and programmes are working and build up a clearer picture of how the centre is improving from year to year. We also want them to encourage more women to give up smoking during pregnancy and more new mothers to take up and sustain breastfeeding.

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