

Inspection report for Hillfields Children's Centre

Local authority	Bristol City Council
Inspection number	366477
Inspection dates	3–4 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Joyce Cox

Centre governance	Bristol City Council
Centre leader	Natacha Yuen
Date of previous inspection	This is the centre's first inspection
Centre address	Hillfields Primary School, The Greenway, Hillfields, Bristol, BS16 4HA
Telephone number	0117 353 4272
Fax number	
Email address	hillfieldschildrenscentre@bristol.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Hillfields Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Mama Bears Day Nursery

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.

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may copy all or parts of this document for non-commercial educational purposes, as long as you give details of the source and date of publication and do not alter the information in any way.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 100024

© Crown copyright 2010

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 an additional inspector and an Early Years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, senior leaders, a representative of the local authority, and representatives from the range of partners who offer services, parents and carers, the advisory board and the chair of the linked primary school's governing body. Inspectors observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Hillfields Children's Centre is located on the site of Hillfields Primary School in East Bristol. It is a phase 2 children's centre and was registered in 2008 to provide family and outreach services. According to local authority data, families attending the centre are mostly on low incomes. Almost 27% of children aged between 0 and 4 are living in households dependent on workless benefits and 16% of families are benefiting from the childcare element of working tax credit. There is a mix of educational attainment and few parents and carers have attended further education. There are a high number of lone parent families. In the past three years the local area has change from a predominantly white community with long established families to a community where there is now considerable diversity. Most children enter early education with knowledge and skills that are lower than those expected for their age. The centre is governed by the local authority through the governing body of Hillfields Primary School. There is also a separate advisory board. The current children's centre leader has been in post since January 2011. There is also a team leader who has been in post since December 2010. Together, they jointly manage the day-to-day running of the centre.

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 offers satisfactory support to children and families. Users describe the centre as 'friendly, welcoming and not at all cliquy.' They told inspectors they appreciate the time staff take to get to know them and their children as individuals. A particular strength of the centre is its effective approach to offering care and support to families experiencing complex difficulties. Centre staff take an active role in developing and implementing a variety of partnership activities which include statutory and private providers. For example, a close relationship with Barnados has resulted in staff being able to support many vulnerable families.

Staff have a sound understanding of child protection procedures, they are well trained and ensure that any concerns are promptly shared with relevant agencies. Case study evidence indicates that families regularly turn to the centre for help in times of crisis.

Outcomes for users, including those who are most vulnerable, are satisfactory. This is because services and activities are satisfactorily matched to the needs of users. Local authority data and professionals' knowledge provide the basis for this. Children who attend the day and sessional care behave well and make good progress in their learning. The centre carefully assesses children's attainment when they join the centre so they can clearly measure their progress over time. However, the lack of a secure outdoor play area for children attending centre activities such as 'Stay and Play' restricts aspects of their physical development.

Users give their views to centre staff, sometimes through formal evaluations of provision, but they do not have the ability to contribute to strategic decision making because there is currently no user on the advisory board; nor is there a users' forum.

The centre's self-evaluation is accurate but, as it recognises, it is limited in depth. Due to a lack of sustained leadership in recent times, procedures for monitoring, evaluation and the collection of data, particularly relating to national indicators, are not sufficiently rigorous. Nor does the centre make sufficient use of the local data to evaluate the effectiveness of its work. Thus, while there is satisfactory knowledge and understanding based on staff experience in working with users, this is insufficient to sustain good and even better development. In consequence, the capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory.

The centre meets its statutory responsibilities for the promotion of equality and diversity. It has been successful in engaging specific groups of minority ethnic parents. For example, in providing bilingual support for Somalian families.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Stabilise centre leadership and work with the local authority and the advisory board to ensure centre staff and all key partners rigorously monitor and evaluate their work and in order to improve outcomes for users.
- Increase opportunities for physical development for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by establishing an outdoor play area at the centre.
- Establish a users' forum and encourage users to become members of the advisory board to ensure that their views have impact.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The majority of users are developing a satisfactory understanding of how to keep themselves and their families healthy through regular support and advice from the centre. This includes free access to fresh fruit and water and healthy snacks that take into account children's dietary needs and any cultural considerations. The centre runs courses such as 'Food is Fun', which successfully targets the estimated 10% of obese Reception-aged children and their families in the reach area. A local breastfeeding support group has recently started at the centre but is currently poorly attended. A music and movement group called 'Jolly Tots' and visits to 'Ugly Bugs', a soft-play centre, provide some physical activities to enhance children's physical development. However, the lack of an outdoor play area for children attending childminder, 'Stay and Play' and 'Sticky Fingers' sessions restricts their further physical development. This is particularly important as many of the families live in flats. A weekly 'baby weigh-in' clinic is always very well attended and supports parents and carers in ensuring their babies are healthy. A community nursery nurse runs popular four-week baby massage courses which are always oversubscribed.

The safety and welfare of all the centre's users, including those who are most vulnerable, are seen as a priority by staff and for the most part procedures work well. Risk assessments are comprehensive so staff can manage potential risks as they arise. The centre knows the families it works with very well. Consequently, the early identification of need and prevention of potential difficulties play a key role in the work of the centre to reduce harm to children. There are effective arrangements to work with children on the child protection register and those involved with the Common Assessment Framework. As a result, families are carefully signposted to a wide range of services and family support including a good, successful programme to recognise and support victims of domestic violence.

Children who attend day and sessional care activities are making good progress. The centre has very restricted internal space but the 'Community Room' where most of the activities occur is bright, clean and very welcoming. Attractive and accessible resources mean that children quickly learn to become independent by selecting and tidying away their own activities. Exciting tasks such as decorating flowerpots and planting seeds keep young children happy, engrossed and active. Children behave well and learn to share and take turns when using resources. Parents and carers complete a folder of their children's work at 'Sticky Fingers', which encourages a sense of belonging for all users. A speech and language therapist works closely with centre staff and users. So, for example, effective use of a 'Talking Tips' programme with parents and carers helps them confidently support children who have speech and language delay. In addition all staff learn sign language so they can communicate with children who are at an early stage of developing language. The impact of this is good. Children with other special educational needs and/or disabilities have effective, enhanced provision from centre staff and as a result, their progress is good.

Parents have satisfactory opportunities to improve their economic stability and have access to training. For example the centre works with a local health care centre to provide a popular 'New Mothers' support group. The centre has run a number of adult learning courses in conjunction with the primary school. Courses include paediatric first aid, information and communication technology, mathematics and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). These classes have been much appreciated by users and have led to a small number of parents and carers accessing further training to improve their employment opportunities. Centre staff invite users to complete an annual questionnaire and they are starting to ask parents and carers to evaluate activities such as 'Stay and Play'. However, users have a limited chance to contribute to decision making as there are currently no parents or carers represented on the advisory board.

Although the centre has good data to demonstrate how successfully its children are enjoying and achieving, it has very limited, collated evidence to clearly demonstrate how it is making a difference in the other four Every Child Matters areas. This is

particularly evident in relation to how it is matching or improving in relation to national indicator data. Overall, the centre's ability to evaluate its impact on the lives of children and their families and make improvements is too limited.

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	3
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	3
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	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	3

How good is the provision?

3

Satisfactory assessment procedures enable the centre to make relevant provision for users' welfare, health and social needs. In-depth knowledge of those working and living in the area, data from the local authority and the views of users and the advisory board inform the programmes available to users.

The centre knows individual families well and is providing satisfactory services to support learning and development to meet their needs. Although much of the provision is for young mothers through baby clinics, 'Sticky Fingers' and 'Stay and Play' sessions, it is adapting to meet the changing needs of the community, for example multi-lingual support groups for different ethnic groups and provision for child minders. Parents and carers benefit from the courses to learn English as they increase their confidence in communicating with others in the community. However, there are no activities on offer specifically for fathers or lone parents. Although the services offered by the centre are well received by users, take-up rates for some activities are limited.

Limited space restricts the breadth of provision on site. Some services, such as midwifery are no longer at the centre because there is no room for private consultations and examinations. Consequently, users travel further away for this service.

Outreach workers promote the engagement of more users through home visits and leaflets. However, the local authority's recent decision to cut the excellent Barnardos

home visiting and support service in Bristol means additional work for the family support team at the centre. The care shown and guidance provided to the victims of domestic violence are a significant strength. Work with the most vulnerable families is good and parents and carers typically report that, 'Staff do all they possibly can to support families.'

Partnerships between professionals, agencies and outreach organisations are good and securely support the most vulnerable families through good support based on effective assessment of their needs. Parents and carers who use the centre regularly confirm that the services they receive are making a difference to their lives by giving them the skills to take actions and make decisions independently based on new learning. As a result, their self-esteem is raised and they are more confident about dealing with issues such as children's temper tantrums and general development.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The centre has been through turbulent times since it began in 2008 which have significantly affected the quality of provision and the quality of leadership and management. This series of events has resulted in many procedures at the centre such as effective data collection on performance not being established sufficiently well. The centre now has a part-time leader who is effectively supported by the acting headteacher of the primary school but uncertainty remains regarding the centre's leadership. Centre staff have high expectations of themselves and high aspirations for all their users. They self-evaluate accurately and, as a result, they know that some of their procedures require sharper organisation, rigour and implementation.

The centre's child protection policy and guidelines are thorough and all staff have been trained at the appropriate levels in child protection procedures. Protocols and practices for referrals are well known and a high priority across the work of the centre. Staff diligently record Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) and List 99 checks

undertaken by partner agencies working at the centre.

Staff are committed to promoting the equality and inclusion of all families within the reach area. Currently, the provision is satisfactory but staff have started to gather information pertinent to different user groups and to evaluate their engagement in order to improve. Partnerships with other agencies are good and are succeeding in improving outcomes for young children. For example a childminders' support group meets weekly in the centre. The coordinator has succeeded in ensuring that all the childminders in the reach area who look after children under the age of five attend every week. Childminders say they feel very well supported by the coordinator and a local nursery headteacher who both interact extremely well with them to provide valuable support and ideas. They say they feel empowered and confident and enjoy meeting with other adults and children which helps alleviate any feelings of isolation.

The centre runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and the well-being of all users is a tangible priority. Resources are satisfactory and support satisfactory outcomes for users. Members of the advisory board and the governing body are dedicated to improving outcomes for children and families and clearly articulate their high expectations for the centre. They have a clear understanding of the part they can play in improving outcomes, strengthening partnerships and realise they need to hold the centre to account more for the services it provides. This includes seeking, more regularly the opinions of partners on the range of provision and, in turn, evaluating more consistently the performance of partners. The contribution that the advisory board and governing body make to the strategic work of the centre is currently satisfactory, but limited because monitoring systems are at an early stage of development. The centre offers satisfactory value for money.

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	3
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	3
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	2
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

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 Hillfields Children's Centre on 3 and 4 March 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for making us feel welcome and for contributing to the inspection by sharing your experience of your children's centre. Many of you told us that the staff at the centre are friendly and welcoming. We could see that children and parents and carers enjoy many of the activities on offer. The centre is particularly good at ensuring parents and users have good care and guidance and that young children make good progress in their learning and development. We think young children would make even more progress in their physical development if they had an outdoor area to play in.

Centre staff and other services work together well to help families who come to the centre during particularly difficult times. The centre staff also work well with a range of partners such as childminders, health and social care to support children's development and help the adults who use the centre to learn new skills. Parents and carers we spoke to reported that they are happy with the centre and have seen improvements in the children's learning and development. We think that staff could find out more about what types of activities you would like at your centre. We also think it would be good if some of you joined the advisory board or had your own users' forum.

There is a written plan which identifies targets for improving the centre's work. We have asked the leader and the governing body to make improvements to the way in which they check how well the centre is doing. Staff say they know there is more to do if the centre is to fully meet the needs of the community.

We would like to wish you, your children and families who live in the Hillfields area the very best for the future.

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