

Inspection report for Finlay and Tredworth Children's Centre

Local authority	Gloucestershire
Inspection number	366337
Inspection dates	16–17 March 2011
Reporting inspector	Joy Law

Centre governance	Local Authority
Centre leader	Allyson Cardis
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
Centre address	Tredworth Road Gloucester, Gloucestershire GL4 6TL
Telephone number	01452 530312
Fax number	01452 530311
Email address	finlaychildrenscentre@gloucestershire.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Finlay Community School Tredworth Infant School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Finlay and Tredworth Children's Centre (Tredworth) – EY385661 Finlay and Tredworth Children's Centre (Finlay) – 510065

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 reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100024.

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 2011



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 early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the local authority, centre staff, partner agencies, parents and carers. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's self-evaluation form, data provided by the local authority and the centre, documents and policies and minutes of meetings.

Information about the centre

Finlay and Tredworth Children's Centre is located in Gloucester city centre. The centre was designated as a phase one children's centre in 2006. The centre operates from two sites. One is within a refurbished building which is shared with Finlay Community School, and the other is on the site of Tredworth Infant School, which is half a mile away. The position of these two sites means that the whole reach area is within five minutes walk.

The area is served by a number of local amenities such as schools, churches and a community room. The ward is classed as being in the top 20% to 30% most deprived wards in England. Eighty five per cent of the population are classified as White British, the remaining being a combination from minority ethnic backgrounds, primarily Asian, Polish and Czech.

The centre provides the full core offer of a range of integrated services that include health, family support, adult training, and early years advice and guidance. Centre services are delivered from the children's centre and through off-site outreach work. The sessional pre-school nurseries offer 15 hours per week of funded early education for two, three and four-year-olds. Sessional care is offered on both sites between 8.45am and 3.15pm during school terms for pre-school children, rising 3's and pilot 2's. Crèche facilities are also provided for those attending centre activities. The skills and knowledge with which children enter the on-site nursery school are below those expected nationally for their age.

The centre is governed by the local authority as a retained centre in the Localities Team. The partnership board is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day running of the centre and its strategic development. It includes representatives of the local authority, staff, parents and carers.

Within the community served by the children’s centre, there are eight full super output areas and five part super output areas. There are 870 children aged under five years in the reach area. Ten per cent of families are lone-parent families (twice the national average) and 21% of families are in receipt of benefits.

The centre employs 29 staff and currently has one commissioned service.

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 leadership and management are satisfactory and are supported by a committed staff team that works effectively together and with their partners. The centre provides a safe and welcoming environment for its users, who value the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on themselves and the lives of their families.

Particular strengths of the centre are the Early Years Foundation Stage provision for children aged between two and four years and the family outreach services. These ensure that children have access to high quality care and education, and those families, whose circumstances have made them vulnerable and disadvantaged, benefit from a range of services that are carefully tailored to meet their particular needs. However, the governance arrangements and partnership working between some services and agencies are less strong. Although now improving, the lack of data, and support and guidance at strategic level, from the local authority has meant that the centre has been less effective in developing its services.

The centre promotes children’s learning well and activities and resources are of good

quality. For example, 'Family Time' and 'Language through Play' sessions are used to enable parents and carers to learn new skills to support their children's learning and development. Consequently, children's social, emotional and language skills are developing well. Services such as 'Journeys to work' contribute to building parents' and carers' confidence. However, the opportunities for adult users to develop their skills and qualifications in order to improve employment prospects are limited.

The centre has satisfactory arrangements for safeguarding all users. Parents and carers say they feel safe and well supported in the centre and are confident that their children are safe and well cared for while attending the setting. Outreach support has provided parents and carers with information on how to create and maintain a safe environment for young children. Referral procedures and sharing of information between relevant agencies working within and outside the centre are good. The centre works effectively with key agencies to reduce the risk of harm to children. Staff are knowledgeable about key safeguarding policies and their use. However, systems in place to ensure all staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding are not sufficiently robust, and records, policies and procedures are not systematically maintained.

The accuracy of the centre's self-evaluation is sometimes inconsistent. Although senior leaders have a relatively secure understanding of the areas for development, the lack of clarity regarding governance arrangements has resulted in the evaluation and improvement planning for targeted support lacking rigour. The evaluation of the centre is largely undertaken by the centre manager, the curriculum lead and the families services manager. The systems currently in place do not fully enable staff, users and the support services to be effectively involved in providing their views, evaluating the effectiveness of the provision and influencing decisions to improve services.

Improvement plans are in place and routinely reviewed to satisfactorily monitor progress and impact. The evaluation of the effectiveness of the children's centre and the areas to improve is largely based upon case studies, users' evaluation of sessions and staff's knowledge of the families they serve. Managers are fully aware of the need to reach more families, particularly fathers and people living in workless households, and are developing strategies to address this.

The children's centre demonstrates satisfactory capacity for improvement. Recently introduced systems by new staff are becoming well embedded and having a positive impact on outcomes for children and families. The centre manager demonstrates a satisfactory understanding of the work of the centre and its priorities for improvement. However, staff, partner agencies and users are less clear about these due to the lack of formal involvement at advisory board level. The local authority is currently evaluating the governance arrangements in place and taking action to improve these. It is also improving systems to provide useful data to assist the centre in identifying areas for development, so that target setting is accurately matched to users' needs.

There is a commitment among the staff to improving the life chances of families in the local community and to promoting equality and diversity. The services offered are used well by a limited range of users. The centre seeks to include families and this is evident through the attendance at sessions. However, the limited availability of interpreters and written information in various languages impacts on all users having an independent voice to share their needs and views about the service, and to contribute to evaluation and decision making.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- In order to identify and meet the needs of members of the community:
 - develop the strategies currently in place to reach out and engage with those who are not accessing the services, particularly fathers and those from workless households
 - increase provision for adults to engage in purposeful learning, development and training opportunities that will help them to move on to employment.

- Improve procedures and systems currently in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by:
 - ensuring all staff have the appropriate safeguarding training
 - updating all records, policies and procedures.

- Develop the governance arrangements by establishing an effective advisory board with membership which includes a range of stakeholders, such as parents and carers, the local community, delivery partners and statutory services.

- Develop systems currently in place to enable all stakeholders including parents, carers, staff and partners, to be more effectively involved in providing their views, evaluating the effectiveness of the provision and influencing decision making to improve services.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The health and well-being of families are improving. Parents, carers and children are developing a sound awareness of adopting healthy lifestyles. They access cooking sessions where they learn about how to cook healthy meals on a budget. The centre supports parents and carers with physical and emotional difficulties well. Parents and carers talk confidently about how their health and well-being have improved and how this has helped their parenting skills. Parents and carers talk confidently about how baby massage sessions have enabled them to help their babies sleep.

Children and users feel safe at the centre. Family support workers provide parents and carers with information on how to create and maintain a safe environment for young children. The centre, in collaboration with partner agencies, is very effective in identifying and responding to the safeguarding needs of children and their families. The use of the Common Assessment Framework for recording and coordinating support programmes is good. Children with child protection plans are well supported. Case studies illustrate that family support workers are effective in helping parents and carers to become more confident and successful in managing their family lives.

The Early Years Foundation Stage profile data show that key outcomes in children’s personal, social and emotional development, and their communication, language and literacy have continued to improve and are now satisfactory. Opportunities for parents, carers and children to play and learn together develop the parents’ and carers’ capacity to support their children’s learning and development well. Holiday activities are increasingly successful and enjoyed by users and have resulted in a high uptake.

Staff provide good role models that successfully support children’s positive behaviour. Parents and carers are encouraged to learn positive behaviour management techniques through attendance at sessions run by the Webster Stratton Group. A culture of respect is evident throughout the centre. Children interact positively with other children, developing relationships as they learn to share and play together.

Parents and carers say they feel ‘included’ and comment on the difference that the centre has made to their confidence and ability to improve their family’s lives. They talk passionately about how the staff support them through difficult times and say that without help from the children’s centre, their lives would be very different.

The centre promotes families’ economic stability satisfactorily, for example by supporting children to develop skills for the future and helping families to secure benefits and housing through the debt and advice sessions.

Some parents and carers have opportunities to share their views with the centre, for example through written evaluation of sessions and attendance at the partnership board meetings. However, their involvement in evaluating the services and action planning is limited. The absence of translators and the limited availability of written information to support families who speak English as an additional language inhibit their ability to contribute their views in a meaningful way.

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, and 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	3
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 and employment	3

How good is the provision?

3

User engagement has increased since the centre opened, with some improvement of attendance across all minority ethnic groups. However, the data available to the centre mean that it is unable to fully demonstrate a good knowledge of all families using its services and how it tailors these to meet their needs. The centre is very aware that there is still some way to go to access all families and to encourage wider community involvement with the services. Engagement with particular groups, such as fathers and workless households is limited; however, work is ongoing to develop and implement strategies to improve this. The range of services and activities has steadily increased; however, many of these are only made available to and accessed by small numbers of users.

The assessment of the needs of families within the reach is satisfactory. Family support workers work creatively and flexibly to meet the needs of children and their families and are successful in supporting them. They assess the complicated needs of families who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances. They work with families directly or engage the appropriate service to meet a specific need. Parents and carers are satisfied with the services and support they receive.

The use of the Common Assessment Framework is securely embedded. All family support workers are involved in assessing the complex needs of families who may be vulnerable due to their circumstances. They work effectively with families directly or engage the appropriate services to meet their specific needs. Case studies confirm how parents and carers suffering from domestic violence and post-natal depression have been well supported. However, support and advice for health services such as drug and alcohol abuse are superficially addressed. Much reliance is placed on the family support workers to pass on a range of information to families. Health services and staff are less proactive in implementing preventative strategies for domestic violence, alcohol and substance misuse.

The centre has worked well in reaching and supporting lone parents, resulting in an increased number successfully accessing services and improving outcomes for themselves and their families. However, there is less engagement with fathers and there are also a number of workless household families who are not engaging with the centre.

The provision to help children learn and develop is good. The centre promotes some

purposeful learning for parents and carers such as 'Family Time' and 'Language through Play' sessions. They and their children enjoy these sessions and attendance helps parents and carers to improve their knowledge to support their children's development. However, the centre's knowledge of adult users' specific needs is variable and the needs of all groups of users are not equally well met. For example, adults with low literacy and numeracy skills are not well supported. The centre is less effective in providing learning, development and training opportunities to support adults to move on to further education or gain employment.

Good partnership working with local schools and pre-schools has a positive impact on children's and families' lives. Transition arrangements for children moving on to Early Years Foundation Stage settings and schools are good. Teachers talk proudly about the confidence children have and how well they settle on their first day at school. Early intervention strategies are effectively implemented, such as speech and language therapy, and have improved outcomes for children. Evidence confirms that children's language skills on entry to school develop quickly as a result of the early intervention. Early Years Foundation Stage Profile results show children make good, and some outstanding, progress given their starting points.

Users are informed about how to access childcare, benefits and housing; however, the absence of Jobcentre plus within the centre and the omission of a job vacancy board limit adults' opportunities to access to job. Some users commented that they would like access to advice regarding career opportunities and more training courses to be made available at the centre.

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	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The centre manager has a strong team who are ambitious, dedicated and committed to improving life chances for their users. Accountability, professional supervision and day-to-day management arrangements are in place and understood by all the team. The centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Governance arrangements are less secure. The lack of a specific advisory board limits the ability of users and partners to fully contribute to the running of the centre and the lack of sufficient involvement and support at strategic level from the local

authority in providing data has created some difficulties for the manager and staff. Consequently, this has slowed the centre's ability to further develop services. However, there is a partnership board in place made up of staff, and parents and carers which provides some limited support and challenge to the centre. The centre manager is involved in a number of partnership meetings at all levels where information about the children's centre is shared. However, decision making regarding the range of activities provided mainly lies with the centre manager who is clear about the centre's priorities.

Staff feel valued, and managers respect the contribution each makes to improving life chances of users. Consequently, the effective work of the centre such as in providing tailored outreach services and in providing opportunities for families to pay and learn together has created a safe, friendly environment where there are high expectations of its users and there is equality for all. The quality of care and support offered to families in times of crisis is good. The Family Support Team works effectively to meet the needs of families who are vulnerable because of their circumstances, including those who are referred to the centre and through self-referral.

Clear and robust procedures to safeguard and promote all users, particularly the most vulnerable, are in place and understood by all. However, not all staff have the most appropriate safeguarding training and although records, policies and procedures are in place they are not systematically maintained to a good standard. However, staff are aware of key safeguarding policies and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential risks that users may encounter. The vetting of staff is secure. Risk assessments are consistently undertaken when family support workers do home visits.

Clear procedures and protocols with social care and health professionals are resulting in increasing numbers of children either on the child protection register or with a family plan being referred to the centre. Good partnership arrangements with social care professionals ensure that children and families at risk or in need are prioritised and effectively supported with positive outcomes.

The children's centre is welcoming, safe and maintained to a satisfactory standard. Most resources are generally well aligned to users' needs. However, limited innovation and creativity occasionally restrict users' abilities to access the centre and outreach services, particularly for fathers and workless households.

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	3
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

An inspection of the on-site registered early years childcare provision was carried out prior to the inspection of the centre under Section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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 Finlay and Tredwoth Children's Centre on 17 and 18 March 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall. We talked with some of you, your children, staff, and a wide range of partners and members of the local authority linked to the centre. We observed the centre's work and looked at a range of documents.

The centre manager and her dedicated team have provided families with a satisfactory range of services that are carefully tailored to meet your particular needs. Those of you who spoke with us said that you feel the centre is supportive and staff are kind and caring, and give you good advice. Most importantly, you said it helps improve your lives, particularly for those of you who are facing difficult challenges. Your children's centre staff team meet regularly to discuss the centre's work and to plan for improvement. All staff place importance on you and your families and provide a listening ear for you. They are keen to create a warm and welcoming environment where you feel at home and are able to talk freely about

things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre and use the services regularly.

Staff listen to what you have to say about the centre and what you need. However, parents and users are not yet fully involved in making the important decisions about the provision of services. The centre offers a satisfactory range of services and activities which are led by skilled and dedicated professionals.

Those of you who use the centre are now much more able to stay safe and healthy and to provide for your families. Staff provide you with access to some training and home visits and give advice on how you can prevent accidents in and around your home to keep your children safe. They are helping you to keep yourselves and your children healthy by encouraging mothers to breastfeed and by giving advice on preparing healthy and nutritious meals.

The parents and carers we spoke with are particularly proud of their achievements. These ranged from becoming better parents and carers, gaining qualifications and entering voluntary or paid work because of the skills they learnt at the centre. The children who use the centre are also well catered for. This means they settle well into the local nurseries and make good progress because they have benefited from the centre's services. The staff at the centre encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at sessions such as 'Family Time' and 'Language through Play'. You told us how much you and your children enjoy the activities you access at the centre and the positive effect these are having on you and your families.

To develop further the work of the centre, we have asked the centre manager and local authority to devise ways to increase the uptake of users, particularly fathers and those from workless households so that they too can benefit from what the centre provides. We have also asked them to increase provision for you to engage in purposeful learning, development and training opportunities that will help you move on to employment.

Staff in the centre are aware of key safeguarding policies and are vigilant in identifying and responding to any potential risks however procedures and systems currently in place to ensure all staff have the appropriate safeguarding training and that all records, policies and procedures are kept up to date is less effective so we have asked the centre to improve this.

We have also asked the local authority to develop the governance arrangements by establishing an effective advisory board, which includes members such as parents and carers, the local community, health services and schools. In addition, we have asked it to develop systems to ensure all parents, carers, staff and partners can be more effectively involved in providing their views, evaluating the effectiveness of the provision and influencing decision making to improve services.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak to us. It was a privilege to be able to talk to you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre, and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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