

Inspection report for Bierley Children's Centre

Local authority	City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Inspection number	367750
Inspection dates	11–12 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Blakey

Centre governance	Sure Start BHT Ltd
Centre leader	Samantha Gamble
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Bobbins Day care Centre, Newhall Road, Bierley, Bradford, West Yorkshire, BD4 6AF
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Bobbins Childcare and Education

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.

An inspection of the co-located primary school was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 5 of the Education Act 2005. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents, the director and assistant director of services, centre manager, senior management team and other staff from the centre. Meetings were also held with local authority representatives, a parent director and staff from a wide range of partner agencies, including the outreach manager from Jobcentre Plus, a health visitor and two midwives. Inspectors observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Bierley Children's Centre, a phase one centre, was purpose built in 2005 and delivers the full core offer of services including education, child and family health services and family support. Children and their families also access services provided in the cluster by Sure Start BHT at two other children's centres; Tyersal and Holme Wood. A director of services leads the three children's centres.

There are 588 children under five years of age in the centre's reach area. Seventy-eight per cent of these children live in one of the 30% most disadvantaged wards in England.

Sixty nine per cent of children using the centre are White British and 4% are of Pakistani origin. The remaining 27% are from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds including Polish, Russian and Chinese. Children's levels on entry to early years provision are below national expectations for their age.

Seventeen per cent of children under five live in households dependent on workless benefits. Ten per cent of 16-19 year olds are not in education, employment or training.

Accountability for the centre lies with Sure Start BHT, a charity and company limited by guarantee.

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

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

2

Main findings

Parents speak highly of the integrated support that they receive at Bierley Children's Centre. As one parent said, 'It's a lovely warm atmosphere and I love coming here.'

The highly effective universal home visiting programme has brought about a year-on-year increase in the number of families receiving support, often in times of crisis. For example, a parent who experienced post-natal depression said, 'They were always on the end of the phone and the staff became my friends. I can't thank them enough.' Families from minority ethnic backgrounds are well represented in the centre and on the board of directors and as one parent said: 'There is no discrimination. We walk through the door and we're all mothers.'

The language development programme for children, established by the centre to meet an identified local need, is highly regarded by teachers and parents alike and provides further opportunities for staff to identify the needs of families. More vulnerable parents, for example teenage mothers, receive excellent support from a specialist midwife and speak highly of the parenting programmes that they have taken part in.

The centre ensures that children, parents and staff are safe. Information and advice are displayed throughout the centre on a range of safety issues, including domestic violence. Parents say that their understanding of how to keep children safe has improved, for example, through the road safety programme that the centre delivers. Local data show children's achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage to be improving and the gap between the lowest achieving children and their

peers is narrowing, albeit slowly. The centre provides an inclusive environment where all users are encouraged to fulfil their potential.

Centre staff assess the needs of children and families exceptionally well and coordinate and deliver a range of support through a multi-agency 'Team Around the Child' approach. Partnerships are strong and a wide range of professionals refer families to the centre. However, the centre is not routinely informed by social services of children who are being looked after, or on the child protection register. Therefore, centre staff are not always able to offer additional support to these vulnerable children. The centre does not reach out sufficiently to those families who do not currently make use of the centre.

The centre does not robustly monitor the impact of its interventions. For example, language development workers do not have access to early years profile scores from local schools to measure progress. Targets in the centre's development plan are linked to local priorities, but they are not specific or measurable. The board of directors, although very supportive of the centre's work, is not sufficiently focused on challenging the management team to improve outcomes.

Staff receive excellent professional development opportunities and are ambitious for the children and families that they support. Leaders and managers know what they need to do to improve provision and have correctly identified priorities. They have significantly increased the centre's reach and have begun to address the recommendations from the Tyersal Children's Centre inspection in January 2011. Capacity to improve is therefore good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen processes of evaluation and strategic planning of services by:
 - providing training to centre staff on methods of measuring impact and analysing data
 - working with partners to set challenging, specific, measurable, time limited, outcome based targets for development and including these in a centre wide development plan, which is owned by all staff and partners.
- Strengthen the governance of the centre by training the board of directors to more effectively scrutinise data and challenge the centre's management to drive further improvements.
- The local authority should support the centre to increase its reach and maximise its impact for vulnerable children and families by:
 - providing data about children from birth to four -year-old who have a disability in the centre's reach area
 - ensuring schools share early years profile scores so that the centre can evaluate the impact of its language development programmes delivered in schools
 - ensuring social care share information about children who are subject to

- child protection orders or who are looked after providing more detailed analysis of data to show the areas where children live who are not currently accessing the centre's services.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Parents enjoy attending 'Stay 'n' Play' sessions, through which they learn how to play with their children and extend their learning at home. They are positive about the parenting programmes they have experienced and say that these have helped them, for example, to improve their confidence, children's behaviour and understand contraception. Adults' evaluations of the centre's programmes to improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills, or develop English as an additional language, are good.

Children enjoy the wide range of activities on offer in the crèche and after-school sessions. Case studies demonstrate that children's language development is improving through a range of provision including the one-to-one 'Talking together' programme and 'Little talkers'. Children's early years profile scores have improved between 2007 and 2010 and they are well supported to make the transition to school.

Health outcomes for children and families are improving. The centre's wide range of healthy living activities, including exercise classes and healthy eating sessions, are well attended and parents know how to keep themselves and their children healthy. Obesity rates of children in Reception have started to fall. Breastfeeding rates remain below the Bradford average but have increased since 2008. The centre's breastfeeding peer support group is well attended. Two midwives deliver clinics at the centre and ask expectant mothers to undertake a carbon monoxide test to identify if they, or someone in their household, smokes. Parents are then referred to the centre's specially trained staff to receive support. The percentage of mothers who quit smoking remains low, but is higher than the Bradford average.

Teenage parents are supported to remain in education, through provision of crèche facilities and financial support through 'Care 2 Learn', which the centre helps them to access. Some parents volunteer at the centre and go on to employment in related work. The centre's work to promote community cohesion is positive. As one parent said: 'We all get along and share experiences about our different cultures.' Behaviour is good, and there are no reports of any bullying.

Family development and language development workers routinely check and advise on home safety during their universal visits, and admissions of children to hospital have fallen since 2008. Children and parents know how to keep themselves safe and say that they feel safe at the centre. Numbers of children with child protection plans and those who are looked after in care are low. The centre works hard to identify these children, as information from local social care staff is not always shared with the centre.

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

All families registered at the centre receive four home visits, starting at six to eight weeks after birth and including a language assessment at the age of two. The family development and language development workers sensitively assess the needs of families during these visits, encourage them to use the centre, and coordinate additional support as appropriate. A parent, evaluating the universal visiting programme said, 'I don't know what I would have done without all her help – she is a credit to Bierley children's centre.'

Staff have effectively increased the number of families using the centre, including those from minority ethnic groups. Provision to support children with their learning is good. However, the centre is not yet able to adequately track the impact of its language development interventions delivered in local schools as data are not always shared. Opportunities for children and families to have fun together are numerous and include annual trips to the seaside and 'Me and my dad' sessions on Saturday mornings. In response to requests from parents, the centre has made changes to programmes and session timings. For example, the wrap-around childcare opens earlier in the morning.

In response to high rates of teenage conceptions the centre has developed a range of targeted support for teenage parents. A specialist midwife runs an antenatal clinic from the centre, and is effectively supported by a family development worker, who coordinates a range of other support after mothers are discharged at 10–28 weeks. The Common Assessment Framework is used to assess the needs of all teenage mums and a specialist parenting programme is delivered. Many teenage parents commented on their increased understanding of breastfeeding, healthy eating, budgeting and contraception. Partnerships between front line staff are strong and make a difference to the lives of these parents and their children. As the midwife

said: 'I have a fantastic relationship with Bierley Children's Centre.'

The quality of care, guidance and support that families receive is of the highest standard. Detailed and informative case studies demonstrate that families receive excellent advice and support on budgeting, benefits and debt management from the centre's dedicated family finance project. In the previous 12 months, this support service has prevented two evictions of families and supported a mother of two children to stop a repossession order on her own property. Children with a disability who are in contact with the centre are well supported through a dedicated portage worker.

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 centre's leaders and managers know their community well. They are ambitious for the children and families that they support and have been effective at improving users' well-being through early intervention. For example, through the language development programmes and financial support. The centre's activities are correctly aligned to addressing local area priorities. For example, reducing infant mortality and increasing achievement at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Partnerships with a range of organisations are positive, and leaders and managers contribute wider at a strategic level in the local area partnership. However, data sharing with some organisations, including schools, is limited and this restricts the centre's ability to target resources further or evidence impact of some of their interventions.

Leaders and managers understand the centre's strengths and areas for development. Centre users are routinely asked their views, and evaluate activities that they attend. The centres' evaluation of the impact of services is underdeveloped and their plans lack the detail required to bring about faster improvements. For example, although priorities for improvement are clear, targets are not sufficiently broken down and are not always challenging, specific or measurable.

The board of directors, which includes five parents, is supportive and manages

resources well. However, they do not sufficiently challenge the management team. For example, too little focus is placed on reviewing progress towards delivering the development plan or on the centre's effectiveness at improving outcomes. Leaders and managers promote equality and diversity through a truly inclusive approach to delivery of services. For example, they have been successful at engaging families of Pakistani origin, and children with disabilities are included in a range of activities and supported through the portage service. However, data provided to the centre by the local authority do not identify children from birth to four years of age with disabilities, and leaders and managers are not therefore able to target support to all of these children. The centre has correctly identified that boys are underachieving but does not routinely monitor data to establish variations between other groups of children or their parents.

Fingerprint and keypad entry systems restrict access to buildings and staff are safely recruited and appropriate checks, including Criminal Records Bureau disclosures, are carried out. Centre staff work well with a wide range of partners to ensure that children and family are safe, and safeguarding training is of a high quality. The centre represents good value for money. Resources are shared across three children's centres and the overall outcomes achieved are good.

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	3
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	3
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	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	2

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 Bierley Children's Centre on 11 and 12 May 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

We were impressed by the way in which the family development workers have encouraged so many of you to attend activities run by the children's centre. Just over three quarters of children aged from birth to four years, and their parents, who live in the local areas regularly use the centre. This represents good value for money. We have asked the centre to work more closely with the local authority to reach out to those families who do not currently make use of the centre.

The universal visiting programme is helping many families. For example, one of you evaluating the work of the visitor said: 'I don't know what I would have done without all her help – she is a credit to Bierley Children's Centre.'

The support that young parents receive is exceptional. The clinics run by the specialist teenage pregnancy midwife and family development worker help young mums to prepare for birth and take care of their babies.

Many parents say that they now have more confidence and are better able to manage their child's behaviour, for example. Many of you told us that the road safety programme had improved your understanding of how to keep children safe.

The family finance project has made a positive difference to the lives of many people living in your community. For example, preventing evictions and supporting families to access benefits. 'Little talkers' and 'Talking together' are helping children to develop their language skills and we noted that children's achievement is improving when they start at school.

We have made a number of recommendations to the centre to enable them to become even more effective. We have asked the board of directors to be more challenging to the centre's management so that they can drive improvements faster. We have also asked the centre to do more to evaluate how effective services are and to set more ambitious and detailed targets for improvement. You can help the centre to become even better by giving your views on the services you use.

We believe that the centre's managers and the board of directors have good capacity to improve the centre. We wish you well for the future and thank you for making us feel so welcome.

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