

## Inspection report for Bulwell Children's Centre

Local authority	Nottingham City
Inspection number	367768
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Reporting inspector	Stella Butler HMI

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Lisa Ash
Date of previous inspection	N/A
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Linked school if applicable	Crabtree Farm Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Pre-school Learning Alliance Bulwell Childcare EY295475

The inspection of this Sure Start Children's Centre was carried out under Part 3A of the Childcare Act 2006 as inserted by section 199 of the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009.

## Introduction

The inspection addresses the centre's contribution to:

- facilitating access to early childhood services by parents, prospective parents and young children
- maximising the benefit of those services to parents, prospective parents and young children
- improving the well-being of young children.

The report is made to the local authority and a copy is sent to the children's centre. The local authority may send the report to such persons it considers appropriate and must arrange for an action plan to be produced in relation to the findings in this report.

This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with parents and carers, centre staff and representatives from partner agencies, the advisory board and local authority representatives. They observed the centre's work, including activities provided at the centre and across the locality, reviewed policies and other documentation, and looked at safeguarding arrangements and data.

## Information about the centre

Bulwell Children's Centre is located in Nottingham city serving an area ranked within 30% of the most deprived in the country. It was designated in September 2006 as part of the phase one Sure Start development. It is a hub for the delivery of family focused support across the ward. It is based in a campus-style arrangement with Crabtree Farm Primary School and Crabtree Community Centre. The Bulwell ward contains one of the city's four priority neighbourhoods (Crabtree Farm & Coventry Road Estate) as identified through the 'Safer Stronger Community Fund', and the children's centre is located in this priority neighbourhood. The centre offers all elements of the full core offer, including integrated childcare and early learning, health, family support and outreach, and has established links to Jobcentre Plus. Day care is provided within the centre by the Pre-school Learning Alliance which manages the 54-place nursery.

In June 2010, 'Targeted Services 0-7', which held the children's centre remit, was restructured and children's centres became part of the new 'Family and Community Teams 0-19'. The management structure for children's centres changed, and operational accountability for Bulwell Children's Centre is now the responsibility of the community team manager. The responsibility of community partnership working for this centre and the newly established Bulwell Forest Children's Centre is held by

the community service manager. Both are based within the children’s centre.

The advisory board meets quarterly and has representation from a range of partner agencies including health, schools, voluntary sector, community safety and parents. The advisory board is developing its membership to ensure it is reflective of the new remit of family community teams. Currently, it is being merged with the extended schools steering group to build capacity and attendance.

Bulwell has high levels of worklessness and the proportion of families on benefits is higher than elsewhere in Nottingham city. Bulwell has a high proportion of people of White British heritage and a few families from minority ethnic backgrounds. The area also has a higher than average number of under 18 year olds at 25.5%. Educational attainment is below the city average with 52% of adults aged 16-24 years having no qualifications compared to only 39% across the rest of Nottingham. Children enter school with skills below those expected for their age.

## 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

Bulwell Children’s Centre provides good services for young children and their families. Leadership and management are good and partnership arrangements with a broad range of agencies and services, especially for the most vulnerable families, are very strong. Learning and development is encouraged and there are good opportunities for children and their parents or carers to play, learn and have fun together.

Equality and diversity are promoted well within the centre and in its satellite provision. Recent re-focusing of the work across the city has increased the intensity of support offered by the children’s centre. Thorough data analysis of its reach area enables the staff to ensure that children and families with the most complex needs receive timely, targeted and high quality services. As a result of careful and rigorous monitoring and assessment, participation rates and outcomes for most of the key target groups are good.

Parents and carers develop a good understanding of healthy lifestyles which is positively influencing children's eating habits and the choices they make. Ante-natal appointments are held regularly by community midwives, and health visitors provide good support through home visits. However, targeted support for pre- and post-birth, specifically for teenage parents, is not currently available at the centre. There is limited support for breastfeeding and parenting skills. Given the high number of teenage conceptions in the area, this is a gap in provision for a key target group.

The centres' policies, procedures and work with families and key agencies to safeguard children are outstanding. Users feel safe in the centre and most say they feel safe in their homes and have been grateful for the support they have received from the centre to achieve this. With good local knowledge and the cooperation of families, the centre staff and partner agencies ensure that children at most risk are kept safe.

After a dip in 2010, focused intervention by the children's centre teacher has led to a steady improvement in the Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores in the six linked primary schools, albeit from a low base. Children achieve well in communication, language and literacy, and personal social and emotional development. Parents and carers who receive targeted support are encouraged to take part in activities which build their confidence and self-esteem: with support, they often move on to skills programmes and further education courses. One parent said, 'I never thought I was any good at school and did not go much. I cannot believe I go to college every day and really enjoy it!' Other parents who access the centre's provision are signposted to relevant skills training and programmes in the area. However, outcomes are not recorded routinely and so evidence of participation rates and successes is anecdotal.

The centre has strong partnerships with external agencies. Governance and accountability arrangements contribute well to the success of the centres' work. The advisory board is currently in transition to reflect the new local authority structure. Its membership from the statutory, voluntary and community agencies is strong. However parental involvement has been erratic and work continues to find a more meaningful way to engage reticent parents in the more formal decision-making processes. Challenging targets are set by the local authority to ensure continuous development and improvement. However, the current self-evaluation process required by the local authority does not help staff to reflect clearly enough how well they are doing to meet the needs of its reach area. In addition, managers do not monitor the impact of signposting activities and the outcomes of adults who go on to further training. Nevertheless, staff morale is very high and commitment to the centre strongly articulated by its users and partner agencies. The centre is well lead, provides good value for money and its capacity to improve further is good.

## **What does the centre need to do to improve further?**

### **Recommendations for further improvement**

- Develop the provision for pre- and post-maternity services within the centre, particularly for teenage and young parents, including support for breastfeeding and parenting skills.
- Increase the opportunities for adult users to be heard and to take a more formal role in the decision-making processes of the centre's work both as critical friends and as volunteers.
- Use evaluation consistently and systematically:
  - to monitor and review the impact and outcomes of the centre's signposting activities
  - to focus on those adults who move on to further training.

## How good are outcomes for users?

2
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Outcomes for parents, carers and children are good. The centre takes significant steps to increase the life chances of the large majority of disadvantaged families in its reach area and outcomes for most of the key target groups are improving well.

Healthy eating and healthy lifestyles activities are extremely popular and include cookery courses, food hygiene, budgeting and diet. Obesity levels in young children are slowly reducing and good role modelling of healthy snacks and lunches is evident. A good range of services are provided by the health visitor team and referrals of new mothers and babies to activities run by the children's centre are frequent. Early referrals to services delivered at the centre such as paediatricians, the speech and language therapy service and counselling ensure timely actions are taken to address concerns. Weigh-in clinics are well attended and the very popular weaning group has improved outcomes for the large number of mothers and babies who attend. Breastfeeding rates are low in the area and initiatives to increase rates have had limited success. However, a breastfeeding 'buddy' group is well attended at the local library and mothers feel well supported; a new initiative to target teenage mothers in the outreach area is about to start. The centre is not reaching enough newly expectant parents, especially teenage parents, to enable the staff to support this group from early pregnancy and moving into parenthood.

The centre is highly sensitive to the needs of the most vulnerable families and does all it can to help them feel safe. Families are confident to turn to the centre in times of crisis. Case studies and monitoring reports show the positive impact the centre is having on users' outcomes through its early intervention work for children subject to the Common Assessment Framework process and those with child protection plans.

Isolation of lone parents is a particular concern in the area and the children's centre is often the first, or only, port of call. One parent said: 'I thought I was going mad. I could not cope and went to the children's centre because I had nowhere else to go. It was like a weight had been taken off my shoulders. I was not on my own any more'. Children behave well and play safely with others in the centre and in the outdoor play area in the nursery. Parents and carers are aware of safe practice and procedures. First-aid training is linked to healthy lifestyles programmes and the parents group that meets weekly. Families value highly the home-safety advice and support they receive.

Young children begin day care with low levels of communication, language and literacy skills. Targeting of the lowest 20% of achievers is closing the gap slowly but steadily. Although children's levels at early foundation stage remain below the average, progress has been encouraging. Schools attribute gains in these levels, in part to the highly effective work of the centre's teacher. Day-care provision in the children's centre is now closely monitoring children's progress and good tracking systems are in place. Transition arrangements to nursery school are effective and well established across the six primary schools through the 'Parents as Partners in Early Learning' sessions and 'getting ready for nursery' groups. Speech, language and communication needs are identified quickly by the teacher through good screening and assessment and information is referred on to specialist services to ensure that the right support is put in place quickly.

Parents and carers say that they enjoy their involvement with the centre. Those attending are encouraged to contribute their views about the quality and range of the provision. The 'Have your say' tree in the main area is an attractive and accessible way of capturing users' views. However, only one parent is currently involved on the advisory board and the staff team are aware that not enough users take an active part in decision making. Members of a lone parents group at the centre say they are listened to, and are proud of their achievements and the opportunities they have been given while coming to the centre. They benefit from a range of short taster sessions and courses for which they receive certificates of attendance and accreditation. These include arts and crafts activities, positive parenting, literacy and numeracy skills, budgeting, food hygiene, health and safety and cooking skills. The centre is developing a community allotment and parents are in the process of growing plants from seed. Children are encouraged to say what they think about the activities and there are good opportunities for them to make choices.

Parents and carers receive good, targeted support and case studies demonstrate that, for many, contact with the centre has helped them to change direction and to take better control of their lives. High quality individual support, advice and guidance from the centre staff helps users to be signposted to specialist services. This is a key activity in helping parents and carers to develop their confidence, coping strategies and skills. Users benefit from a wide range of opportunities for family learning, including parenting skills, family literacy and numeracy and play. These are available

from first steps and non-accredited courses to level 1 and 2 programmes that parents are encouraged to attend. However, the centre does not record these outcomes systematically so they do not know whether parents and carers take up further training or gain any tangible benefit from their participation. Some 'ready for employment' courses and budgeting programmes have run at the centre but these are ad hoc sessions and not regularly delivered. Parents who have attended these courses say they have been very helpful particularly in identifying skills they wish to develop further and in helping with money matters.

*These are the grades for the outcomes for users*

<b>The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children engage in positive behaviour and develop positive relationships and users contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training</b>	<b>3</b>

## **How good is the provision?**

<b>2</b>
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Systems to assess and monitor the needs of children and their families are both effective and rigorous, underpinned by good information-sharing protocols with most of the partner agencies. Staff understand the needs of their users well. They receive effective support from the local authority to analyse key data about the target groups in the reach area and to review and respond to changing trends and needs. Staff at all levels play a key role in helping the most disadvantaged families and children to access services and resources. The Common Assessment Framework processes are used well.

The quality and range of provision offered by the centre are good, particularly for parents, carers and children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. The centre is a bright and welcoming place, well used by a range of parents and children coming

to the centre for day care provision, individual and specialist support, healthcare services and group activities. All areas of the centre are safe, clean and attractive and good quality resources including books and toys are available for children and parents to use. The centre works closely with partner agencies and providers in the area to ensure the programme of activities meet needs and are not duplicated elsewhere in the area. Good quality activities and services ensure that purposeful learning is promoted. Parents are encouraged to engage in activities which will increase their knowledge and personal development. The centre ensures equality of access to all its users and reflects cultural diversity in most instances. Crèche provision is arranged when it is required for parents to access activities on site. Good relationships have been established with the on site nursery to ensure the quality of child care is good. This is leading to improved outcomes for families.

Provision to meet the needs of children and adults with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good. Portage workers provide good support to children and their families. The staff work hard to empower users in supporting their children. They attend meetings with them and act as advocates to ensure the parents' and carers' voices are heard. Staff also use a parenting assessment tool to identify the level of support a parent or carer with additional learning needs may require. This gives staff invaluable information to identify and put in to action support that users may need in the future.

Staff take good care of the children and adults. Parents and carers value the good quality care, guidance and support they receive and appreciate the non-judgmental way the staff help them to develop strategies and skills. One parent commented 'The workers treat me with respect and make me feel that I can make my life better.' Case studies show the impact of the centre's involvement and how careful and sensitive interventions are de-escalating crisis situations effectively. The centre has developed good links with a range of local service providers such as, the community neighbourhood team, the police, tenancy support services, Jobcentre Plus, Connexions, Welfare Rights and the social care team. These ensure that staff can access advice and enable parents and carers to receive positive assistance on referral. Information and signposting about topics such as sexual health, benefits, housing, drug and alcohol misuse, dental health, crime and domestic violence are available at the centre. However, although poster information is available in other languages none were on display during the inspection. Signs and symbols are used throughout the building and thought is given to ensuring displays and information are accessible to those users who struggle with literacy.

*These are the grades for the quality of provision*

<b>The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users</b>	<b>2</b>



<b>The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>

### **How effective are the leadership and management?**

<b>2</b>
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Governance arrangements are good. Lines of accountability are clear and rigorously applied. The advisory board has been newly constituted and has recently held its inaugural meeting. Membership is strong and reflects not only the very high regard the children’s centre holds particularly for its early intervention work but also the wide range of good partner agency involvement and activities within the area. The community manager and senior team are effective and show real passion and commitment to improving outcomes for some of the most disadvantaged families in the area. Good-quality management ensures the day-to-day running of the centre and its outreach programmes operate smoothly. Expectations of the staff team are high and effective supervision and performance management ensure that staff understand their responsibilities and deliver good services.

Good partnership arrangements with key agencies and providers in the locality and city-wide help to secure swift actions to meet identified needs. Staff and partner agencies are committed to evaluating and reflecting good practice. Management supervision is provided to all staff to make sure they regularly review their work with users and respond in appropriate ways to needs and circumstances as they arise. Monitoring and evaluation recorded on a day to day basis are used to inform the local authority’s self evaluation form. The current self-evaluation process however does not reflect the changes to the focus of the centre’s work and is therefore not a helpful tool for managers to demonstrate accurately the good outcomes they are achieving, particularly in the targeted, early intervention work.

The centre targets its resources effectively. It has successfully engaged with the most vulnerable groups in its reach area, particularly those isolated parents and families from the Black Caribbean community. Children with disabilities are well supported. Equality and cultural diversity issues are promoted well across the centres’ activities and to help develop awareness and encourage inclusion. Translation services are available for users with additional language needs. Staff are well qualified and receive regular access to a range of training and development opportunities to make sure they can access the skills they need. Users are encouraged to become volunteers at the centre but very few take up the opportunity and the centre is aware that it does not have regular recruitment and training procedures to build the volunteer team. Finances are monitored closely and scrutinised to ensure that benefits can be measured and good value for money is assured.

Safeguarding procedures are outstanding. Safer recruitment systems are closely adhered to by all staff and partner agencies that come in to the centre and provide services. All relevant checks are made to ensure that staff are suitable and safe to work with children and vulnerable adults. Staff receive regular and ongoing child protection training. They are highly confident and competent in their working practices and are fully informed and aware of their duties to safeguard users. Risk assessments are completed rigorously for all activities and visits. Lone working arrangements are closely monitored. Any concerns are logged daily and discussed with senior managers or passed on to other services where necessary. This ensures the safety of workers and users. Transport arrangements when used to take children and their parents to activities or visits are tightly adhered to, following local authority safeguarding procedures.

The centre has worked hard to reach and engage the large majority of its key target groups and has had good success in sustaining their involvement in the centre's own and outreach activities. It has been particularly successful in making contact with those families who are isolated or are struggling to cope in the local area. The centre knows it has more to do to engage teenage parents and to encourage users to take a more active role in planning and developing services on a day to day basis.

*These are the grades for leadership and management*

<b>The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The effectiveness of the centre's policy, procedures and work with key agencies in safeguarding children and, where applicable, vulnerable adults</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>The extent to which evaluation is used to shape and improve services and activities</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the</b>	<b>3</b>

<b>wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision</b>	
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**Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection**

Crabtree Farm Primary School  
 Pre-school Learning Alliance Bulwell Childcare

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**Summary for centre users**

We inspected Bulwell Children Centre on 25 and 26 May 2011. We judged the centre to be good overall.

Thank you to those of you who contributed to the inspection. The centre works very well with other services and professionals in the area. Some of you told us how this has helped you in times of crisis, making sure you can get the right help at the right time with the workers support. You told us how much you have gained from being involved with the centre and how you have grown in confidence and have improved your skills, particularly as parents and carers. The centre works hard to bring together services, information and advice about health, education, jobs and money. If the centre cannot provide services at the centre then they help you or show you where you can go to get support and information. This is helping many of you improve your lives.

You told us that you enjoy healthy eating activities at the centre and have learnt to cook healthy meals for your family; some of you are also helping to develop the community allotment and look forward to eating the vegetables when they are ready. We have asked the centre to help new parents during pregnancy, and particularly teenage parents, to develop their parenting skills. The centre gives great importance to making sure you and your children are safe. Some of you told us that you feel very safe in the centre and that you appreciate the help staff give you to help you stay safe at home.

You told us that you enjoy activities where you can play and learn with your children and this is helping to improve your children’s speech and language, as well as

helping them prepare for school. This is helpful in giving your children a better start at nursery. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive good support from the portage workers and you say that you really appreciate this help. We learnt that some of you have enjoyed the taster sessions at the centre when you receive certificates, which make you proud of your achievements. We know that some of you have gone on to take higher qualifications in the local college. The centre could not tell us how many of you have done this and so we have asked the staff to keep better records in the future.

The centre is keen to hear your views and often ask you about how well the sessions have gone and if you would like to do new activities. You told us that the centre has helped you grow in confidence and that you are now more able to speak out. However, only one parent is involved in the advisory board where decisions are made about the range, quality and cost of activities the centre manages. A small group of parents and carers has completed training to become volunteers at the centre. We think it is very important that more of you get involved in sharing your feelings, concerns and ideas about all the activities of the children's centre and become volunteers. We have asked the centre to help you contribute and develop your skills more effectively.

The children's centre is led and managed well. The community team and service managers, the teacher and centre staff, partners and the advisory board are committed to the success of the centre in improving the lives of families living in your community. They work hard to make sure that the programmes on offer are of good quality.

We think that the centre gives good value for money and is well placed to become even better. We wish the centre and you and your families all the best for the future.

The full report is available from your centre or on our website [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).