

Inspection report for Burnage Children's Centre

Local authority	Manchester
Inspection number	382103
Inspection dates	25 – 26 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Brian Padgett HMI

Centre governance	Manchester Local Authority
Centre leader	Wendy Burton
Date of previous inspection	9 June 2010
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Linked school if applicable	N/a
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY402662 Burnage Community Playgroup EY104352 Burnage Children's Centre Daycare

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 a childcare inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with centre staff, parents and carers, providers of services and a representative of the local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Burnage Children's Centre is a Phase 1 children's centre providing the full children's centre core offer¹. It was opened in 2006. It includes a local authority day nursery providing places for 27 children. A 48 place independent playgroup, the Burnage Community Playgroup, also uses the building and grounds.

The centre provides a base for half of the Manchester South Early Intervention Team of family workers. It also provides a base for the Manchester South Specialist Resource Team for pre-school children with special educational needs and/or disabilities, providing support and intervention to children aged nought to five and outreach family support nought to 14.

The centre serves the ward of Burnage to the south east of Manchester city centre. It is an area of mixed housing bisected by a main arterial road, Kingsway (A34). Overall, the area is socially and economically disadvantaged. The large majority of families fall within the 30% most socially and economically disadvantaged in England. About 80% of the population is White British. The remaining 20%

¹ The full offer for children's centres comprises: quality childcare and early learning available year round; access to child and family health services and quick and easy reference to specialist support services for children and families, including outreach; support for childminders; and, help for parents to access training and employment through Jobcentre Plus and other training providers.

comprises a broad range of minority ethnic groups, with families of Pakistani heritage being the most numerous. There are about 16,000 people living within the ward, with approximately 1,200 of these being children under five years of age. Children entering early years settings usually have levels of skills and knowledge below those of most children of their age.

The centre was first inspected in June, 2010, when its overall effectiveness was judged inadequate. The day nursery and the community playgroup were inspected separately from the children's centre, also in 2010. Their reports may be found on the Ofsted website.

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

4

Main findings

The overall effectiveness of the centre is no longer inadequate. All aspects of the centre's work, including its leadership and management, are satisfactory or better. The one exception is its capacity for sustained improvement, which has been significantly reduced by actions outside its control.

When the centre was first inspected, the majority of judgements made about the centre were inadequate, including major judgements about outcomes, the quality of provision, and leadership and management. There have been many positive changes since the first inspection. Safeguarding is now good following modifications to the building and changes to routines and procedures. For example, the car park is safer for children and families now that it is reserved for staff use only. There is convincing evidence that, through the centre and its partnerships, parents and carers are gaining the skills and qualifications that will help them secure future employment. The centre has improved its communication with partners, such as with general practitioners and with the local community centre. It uses its local knowledge and the data available more effectively to work with partners in designing activities that meet the needs of local families. It evaluates the success of these activities with greater rigour than before. Leaders and managers have focused on the recommendations from the previous report in order to prioritise their efforts and

have been successful in addressing the concerns. However, although overall governance is satisfactory, the advisory board is not fully effective. Its work is not managed efficiently at present and there is insufficient representation from the community in decision-making.

The centre works seamlessly with its day nursery. The welcoming ethos of the centre is replicated in that of the nursery. Parents and carers have confidence and trust in the approachability of all the staff and their willingness to support them. Some parents who spoke to inspectors were at pains to make clear how exceptionally caring and supportive staff had been at times of family crisis. The centre is inclusive and promotes racial equality and community cohesion. It is successful in supporting the growing number of minority ethnic families within the community.

The centre's relationships with health partners are strong. Midwives refer any concerns felt by prospective parents through to the outreach worker or centre staff in the most natural of ways because they are on site and know each other well. The vital relationship between the centre and health visitors, although perfectly satisfactory, is set to be further strengthened when health visitors complete the move from the nearby health centre to a new base in the children's centre. Further developments are also at an advanced planning stage. The link with Jobcentre Plus, at a minimal level a year ago, is to undergo considerable strengthening by providing a full range of courses, support and advice on site for those within Burnage seeking to move into or return to work. Relationships with local schools are less well developed than with health, although there are plans of good quality to track the development and learning of all children. At present, the community benefits from the two area services located within the centre: that for early intervention for children in families experiencing social difficulties and that for children of pre-school age who have special educational needs and/or disabilities. The easy access to these specialists for centre staff is a considerable plus point for them and local families as expert advice may be sought speedily, face-to-face.

Indicators from data and feedback from the centre's partners and families suggest that outcomes for children and families may be improving, albeit slowly and not always consistently or, in the case of children who are obese, not getting worse. Local schools indicate that the children from the centre's nursery have a good transition to Reception classes but overall, children from the wider area continue to arrive with low levels of skills, particularly in language development and social and emotional development. Many of the centre's activities are focused on improving children's readiness for school and in identifying problems early.

The centre's improvement has taken place against a recent background of disruption and reduction in staffing. The local authority has moved to reduce its budget and the centre has suffered a considerable loss in experience and expertise in its core staff. Further permanent reductions are to follow, such as the loss of the centre's teacher. Many partners are planning for a reduction in service and hope to provide more targeted interventions within the community. They see the future work of the

centre's outreach worker as critical in locating and working with families they wish to target. However, the only centre outreach worker is already fully stretched, with an extraordinarily high number of children and families to reach within Burnage and in servicing two neighbouring Phase 3 centres. The centre staff have shown considerable resilience and commitment to date in maintaining improvement. However, the centre no longer has the capacity to sustain this momentum because the increased demands exceed the centre's resources to meet them.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- The local authority should ensure that the centre has the necessary means to be able to sustain its improvement.
- The centre should continue to develop the relationship with local schools to identify how best to ensure children and their families from across Burnage are well placed to gain fully from all that school provides and to implement actions to do so.
- Centre leaders with their partners should revise the working of the advisory board. They should give it a more effective structure, promote more effective decision-making and give the community a greater voice in decisions.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The judgement reflects the mixed success of the centre to date to improve outcomes for the community. The families that access the centre make significant progress. However, with approximately 1200 children in Burnage under five years and with no more than 200 or so able to secure places at the nursery, playgroup or with the local childminders, there is a considerable job to do to reach families in their homes, particularly for the children nought to three years. The National Indicators for children's and family health, safety, learning, positive contribution to the community and for economic well-being are, relative to the city and to national comparisons, marginally positive. They show general improvement albeit at a slow rate and are often rather better than the levels of disadvantage might suggest. For example, the people of Burnage feel they get on well together to a much better degree than those in Manchester as a whole and the rest of the country.

Levels of attainment at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage show a positive trend and the gap between the lowest achievers and others appears to be reducing, although this is not yet consistent from year to year. Signposting is effective and families attending the centre gain from a range of activities that promote healthy eating, exercise, safety in the home and improved care and management of children, such as of their behaviour. Families benefit from the co-location of specialised services at the centre, so parents with children with special educational needs and/or

disabilities and vulnerable parents and their children facing challenging circumstances gain particularly from contact with the centre. The nursery has designated places for children in need and multi-agency assessment arrangements are robust, enhanced by the presence of the Manchester South Early Intervention Team's family support workers.

Parents from a wide range of backgrounds and ethnicities follow adult learning courses at the centre and there are regular appointments for families seeking financial advice through the Citizen's Advice Bureau. Parents contribute towards the Burnage Family Voice forum although only one representative goes forward to the centre's advisory board.

Outcomes for families and children attending the children's centre dipped recently as some of the centre's key staff left and its partners readjusted their resources and approaches following the local authority's decisions on its budget. The centre's capacity to provide courses and activities lessened. The key facilitating roles of the administrator, teacher and outreach worker were lost. Gradually, although further reductions are yet to be made, the centre has recovered its momentum. At the time of the inspection a new baby massage class was very well received and attended. Parents who were new to the centre, were there as a result of effective signposting and collaboration between health services and the new outreach worker.

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	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	3

How good is the provision?

3

The assessment of children's and family needs is much improved over the past year and is now good. The centre now uses data better and links well with health services to find out what courses and activities parents actually want. Partners then tailor courses to meet these needs. Two such courses were explained by a speech and language therapist. One was tips for parents and carers about televisions and how to

control their use in the home and the other, about the need, or not, for children to have dummies. The assessment of levels of learning and development of children transferring to local schools is secure and the quality of transfer records improving. However, for the children and families in the area who do not attend the centre, there is much work to do to help them prepare for school.

The range of services for families who are vulnerable is good. Those for families with social difficulties, including drug abuse, are on site, as is the service for pre-school children with special educational needs. In addition, the centre has well-established contacts with a range of statutory and voluntary partners and successfully meets the needs of parents and carers facing a wide range of challenging circumstances. One such agency, the Children and Parents Service from Health clearly demonstrated their success in supporting families and children with behaviour and emotional issues, and showed that the improvements were long-lasting.

For those families and children it reaches, the centre staff provide an exceptionally warm welcome. The centre has increased the proportion of the families who have registered by around 40% since the last inspection, and all parts of Burnage are represented. Minority ethnic groups are particularly well represented and form just over half of all new registrations. The task of promoting the work of the centre in the community is undertaken by the outreach worker. This work has been interrupted over the course of the year, resulting in fewer courses and activities than might have taken place. However, a new outreach worker has joined the centre and has already made a good start in working with a range of partners and the community.

Both day-care settings based at the centre were judged as good in their inspections in promoting learning and development. One local school felt that children transferring from the centre were well prepared for school. Adults, including those with English as an additional language and those who have faced challenging services, have undertaken courses in basic skills at the centre and there is a high success rate for those who go on to take further qualifications at the nearby Withington College.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	2
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 is led and managed by a very small team that has recently been severely disrupted. One of the strengths of the centre, with its day nursery, is the willingness of managers from the centre and the nursery to work very closely together for the benefit of children and families. Hence, when staff and services were being reduced recently, the centre was able, as far as possible, to maintain 'business as usual'.

Leaders and managers have developed productive relationships with a wide range of partners, who rely on the centre to facilitate and signpost their services effectively. Some partnerships, such as with health services, are strong. Others, for example, with local schools, are less strong. The range of services is particularly effective in providing for vulnerable families, and in providing for families with children with special educational needs and disabilities. Leaders are mindful over providing equality of opportunity, but the centre is more effective in recruiting families from minority ethnic backgrounds than those of the majority White British background. Physical safeguarding arrangements within the centre are much improved over the year. With their emphasis on providing successfully for vulnerable children and families, leaders and managers ensure the centre contributes well to safeguarding within the community.

Overarching governance of the centre is satisfactory. Leaders are subject to scrutiny and accountability from the local authority and their performance managed. Leaders have developed a forum, the Burnage Family Voice, to enable the community to make its views known. However, the advisory board is not functioning effectively as yet. It appears to act as an information forum at present, rather than a centre decision-making body and the community is under-represented.

Leaders and managers are becoming more effective in evaluating the success of the centre's activities. Data analysis is improving as more data at a local level becomes available, although the availability of staff to input and interpret data has been affected by the budget cuts. Leaders have adopted an effective approach to evaluating the progress of each family over the course of an intervention that is helping them and the families they serve see how far they have progressed. The centre provides 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	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	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

The day care and community playgroup were inspected independently in 2010. Both were judged to provide good quality education and care. The inspection reports were taken into account during this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Burnage Children's Centre on 25 and 26 May 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre was first inspected a year ago, along with the day nursery. Although the day nursery was judged as good, the children's centre part was judged inadequate. This early re-inspection was arranged to find out if the centre had improved.

We are pleased to report it has improved. We found no aspect of the centre's work to be inadequate and some to be good. The centre's leaders and managers, along with local authority officers and partner organisations, have worked on each of the recommendations left by the first Ofsted inspection and successfully addressed the concerns.

One main concern was about safeguarding. The building has been modified and reorganised, procedures have been tightened up, and the car park made safer for children, parents and the community. Safeguarding is now good. We checked whether the full core offer for centres was being provided, as there was a worry over whether parents were being helped into training and work. There was clear evidence of parents and users of the centre from a range of backgrounds becoming volunteers and gaining qualifications. Better support is to come. We talked to a representative from Jobcentre Plus about well-advanced plans to become a regular contributor to the centre and significantly extend the opportunities for support and advice for job seekers.

Behind the scenes, the centre's leaders and managers have worked with their partners to improve the sharing of information, for example, they now know about all the babies born in Burnage. The centre has improved communication, it analyses data better and tailors its courses better to reflect your needs – to provide what you want rather than what is available 'off the shelf'. Its assessment of needs is now good. Its evaluation of whether the activities have helped you has much improved. There is still work to be done. Communication with local schools is not as good as that with, for example, health partners, and the centre's governance, through its Advisory Board, is in need of an overhaul for several reasons, including that the community should have better representation than it has at present.

The strengths of the centre have been maintained. The friendly and welcoming ethos that is so important to the community remains. Staff from the nursery and centre staff work seamlessly together. Several parents commented on the staff's exceptional care, concern and support for them, particularly so in helping them through personal and family crises. The centre is very inclusive. Members of the community from minority ethnic backgrounds make good use of its services and the centre is effective in its provision for children and parents and carers who find themselves in trouble or need.

Signs are that the centre, through its provision for children and families and its work with partners, is contributing to improved outcomes in the community. There is nothing spectacular but children's attainment is improving and some indicators of concern that were rising, such as the increase in young children who are obese, have stopped.

The centre's improvement is all the more creditable because, in the last four months or so, there has been considerable disruption to staffing and within its commissioned services, as the local authority put into place its arrangements to cut the centre's budget. Significant experience, knowledge and understanding of the work of the centre have been lost and more is to go. All services have been reduced and partners are preparing to work in different ways, more focused on where need is greatest. One difficulty for the centre is that the new approaches being developed are even more dependent on the role of the outreach worker as a facilitator than they were before. We believe the centre has no further capacity to take on an increased role, particularly the one outreach worker. Therefore, although the centre now provides the core offer for children's centre satisfactorily, and in some aspects,

well, it has not the capacity to continue its improvement at a good enough rate. This is a matter for the local authority to address.

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