

Inspection report for Abbey Green Nursery School & Children's Centre

Local authority	Bradford Metropolitan District Council
Inspection number	367729
Inspection dates	19-20 May 2011
Reporting inspector	Joan Cawdron

Centre governance	Local authority
Centre leader	Margot Dixon
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Abbey Green Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY356103 Abbey Green Nursery School & Children's Centre full day care

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 maintained nursery 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 centre staff, three representatives from the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and two further governors, four senior teachers from local schools, and with a broad range of users and a number of partners including health services. They observed sessions at the centre and at other venues, looked at the centre's work, and reviewed a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Abbey Green Nursery School and Children's Centre is located in Manningham, Bradford. It has been providing the full core offer for children's centres in areas with the highest levels of deprivation since 2004.

The population of Manningham is ethnically diverse. Most families are of Pakistani heritage and there are smaller numbers of Indian, Bangladeshi families and an increasing number of asylum seekers and families from Eastern Europe. The centre serves an area with high levels of social and economic disadvantage with the majority of wards within the 30% of the most deprived areas of England. High numbers of children live in families in receipt of benefits and/or where parents or carers are not in work. Within the reach area of the centre there are significant issues surrounding unemployment and low levels of adult literacy and numeracy.

Governance of the centre is provided by the local authority in conjunction with the school and children's centre governing body. Childcare, free nursery education, stay

and play and regular crèche sessions are provided at the centre. A range of health, social care, family support and education services operate from the centre with associated professionals and centre staff. There are links to local primary schools.

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

Abbey Green Children’s Centre provides a warm, welcoming and safe environment for all its users. They value the work it does and recognise the positive impact it has on their lives. One parent described the views of many and said ‘attending a group activity has increased my confidence, I no longer feel alienated. This has affected me in every single aspect of my life’. Multi-agency partnerships are strong and particularly responsive to meeting the needs of families. The centre provides a good range of services that are effectively raising the knowledge of parents and carers about healthy lifestyles and keeping their children safe.

Support for mothers following the birth of their baby is good, particularly important as there are high numbers of under-weight babies in this area. Breastfeeding is very well supported and encouraged by the health service team and the family support workers. One mother commented that ‘this was the most amazing experience achieved through the support of the centre staff and this is my third child, but the only one that I have breastfed.’ Within the reach of the centre there are significant issues surrounding unemployment and low levels of literacy and numeracy. Through good links with Jobcentre Plus, parents have opportunities to develop their language skills and CV writing and to improve their chances of finding work. However, the centre is not meeting the needs of some families in the wider community where more support is needed to improve their ability to converse in English and to prevent isolation.

The centre is an inclusive setting and by engaging with children with learning difficulties and families from a wide range of cultures promotes equality well. Particularly strong actions are taken to support many vulnerable families and children, as well as those who require support in times of acute need or crisis,

through close multi-agency working and a highly effective family support team. Staff at the centre speak a range of languages, and interpreters are used to support communication where necessary. Overall, the number of families attending the centre is consistently high, and the achievements of children are good. However, because the centre is not yet meeting fully the needs of all the families who would benefit from their services, equality and diversity is judged as satisfactory.

The children's centre now has stable leadership after a period of instability at senior level. The centre manager has successfully created a culture where centre staff work well together as a team and are motivated to continue improving the work of the centre. A key strength of the centre is the leadership provided by this new team and the local authority. Effective leadership has contributed to ensuring that outcomes for users are good. However, recent changes to the composition of the governing body, including the appointment of a new chair, have limited governors' capacity to influence and challenge the centre management team. The centre correctly identified that governance is satisfactory. Further training for members of the governing body is planned to enhance their understanding of the wider aspects of safeguarding and the ability to challenge senior leaders.

The centre has evaluated its activities robustly after an extensive consultation process and listened and responded positively to what parents and carers say. Data provided by the local authority are good and together with the information from the consultation process enable the centre to plan more effectively for improvements to key services.

The centre provides good value for money. The collaborative culture, motivated staff and good user outcomes; as well as its highly effective leadership and current knowledge of the needs of the area, through dialogue with users in the community, give it good capacity to improve further. Safeguarding is good and meets all legal requirements and ensures that all users feel safe at the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Encourage new members of the governing body to develop their skills enabling them to influence and challenge the centre to continue to develop its provision and to meet all of its priorities.
- Extend the promotion of centre activities to engage more families in the wider reach of the community so that they can benefit from the support the centre can provide. Increase specifically those programmes designed to improve the economic stability and independence of adults.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Increasing numbers of users access the services provided by the centre and take up rates are high. All groups that attend the centre, from a variety of backgrounds, work harmoniously together. The centre addresses effectively users' feelings of isolation and provides good opportunities for families to engage in a range of services and to begin to develop friendships. A typical view is that 'there are many different people here you never see or meet if you didn't come to the centre'. Users report that their confidence and self esteem has improved since attending the centre.

Evidence through case studies and discussions with parents and carers, all reflect the very positive impact the centre has on children's and families' emotional well-being and physical health. Families noticed improvements after attending healthy eating and exercise programmes and through healthy walks in groups around the area. Increasing numbers attend healthy eating cookery sessions and parents and carers comment that they now grill more instead of frying food. These activities are helping the centre work towards reducing the number of children under the age of five who are either obese or underweight.

All services offered in the centre keep users safe. The centre's good quality relationships with families and their children allow staff to identify any safety concerns within families and to intervene appropriately. Case studies and discussions with parents provide strong evidence that having access to language development classes helps parents and carers form relationships with others. This support also enables them to better understand the wider range of information they receive on improving their children's communication skills, learning and behaviour.

Children are well prepared for nursery and mainstream school due to the effective delivery of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children are provided with good quality learning experiences and these have a positive impact on their learning and development. Adults are offered educational courses that help them develop their English language skills from very low levels up to level three. The centre has positive relationships with Jobcentre Plus. However, high numbers of families have low levels of English language skills and this inhibits their progress in developing the skills and qualifications they need to increase their life chances/employment prospects.

Children's behaviour throughout the centre is good. The centre staff successfully promote a sense of belonging and respect for different cultures. As a result, users and staff fully enjoy their time spent in the centre. Cafe style meetings include play sessions and these successfully encourage parents and carers to play actively with their children. Several parents have been recruited to the governing body, where they can influence plans for future activities.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups,	2
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are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	
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	3

How good is the provision?

2

Staff understand thoroughly users' needs as a result of sensitive personal contact and good partnerships with health and social care professionals and with local schools. The assessment of individual cases is robust and the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is used successfully to ensure teams can be assembled quickly to support children and families when needs are identified. For example, outreach support is provided by support workers with a key role in helping those with children who have special educational needs. Their support is valued by those whose safety may be at risk as a result of domestic violence and others who, for a variety of reasons, are isolated and those who have experienced acute trauma in their lives.

All interventions are child-centred. Staff have a strong focus on supporting families in the best interests of children. Learning and development and enjoyment are supported through a range of activities and services, such as stay and play, swimming, and family life programmes. The centre has developed good outdoor play areas, including an exemplary garden adventure area with many elements to stimulate learning. The centre grows vegetables and uses these in family 'cook and eat' activities, enhancing the knowledge of users on how they can grow vegetables in pots at home.

Sessions for fathers are held on Saturdays enabling some who do not have daily access to their children to spend time with them. A number of fathers are extending their links with the centre by representing others on the governing body. Feedback from local schools includes comments on the higher levels of confidence and abilities of children who have accessed learning and development activities through the centre. Transition arrangements for children moving onto school are managed effectively through visits by teachers to the centre and children's visits to their chosen school. The children's centre prepares a series of photographs, familiar to the children that teachers can use to help settle them in their new schools. Planning for delivery of activities and services is effective with priority given to those in areas of

highest deprivation. Staff use assessment tools to record the development of the children to ensure they all make appropriate gains in their learning.

Care, guidance and support are good. Sensitive, individualised and tailored support is provided to all families and children who access the centre. There is evidence of much good multi-agency working which ensures that families can access the right kind of support from health visitors, midwives and mental health workers.

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	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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Members of the governing body and senior leaders are committed to inclusion and improving the life chances of families in this multi-cultural community. The governing body acknowledges that it needs to develop its skills and knowledge further to be able to play a greater strategic role in developing the centre further. Financial management is thorough with a clear focus on sustainability.

Self-evaluation is very effective and informs planning and target setting. An extensive consultation process with the community has been carried out. Meetings with staff have identified key strengths and weaknesses. This detailed analysis of users' views has made the centre more aware of those areas that are effective and those requiring further development, such as extending the impact of the centre's provision in supporting asylum seekers and those from Eastern Europe. These aspects have been brought together to develop the centre's strategic plan and to set clear targets for improvement. The performance management of staff is rigorous and arrangements for supervision meetings and appraisals are thorough.

The centre provides an inclusive setting and engages with children with learning difficulties and families from a wide range of cultures. Particularly strong actions are taken to support many vulnerable families and children as well as those who require support in times of acute need or crisis. The number of families attending the centre is consistently high, and the achievements of children are good. However, the centre is not yet meeting fully the needs of all the families who would benefit from their services, particularly those from groups that are experiencing isolation within the community.

Leaders set an ethos within the centre where safeguarding is a high priority. Guidance is provided on the use of information and communication technology and flow charts outline the steps where child protection issues may be identified. Very effective team work empowers staff ensuring that families, regardless of backgrounds, achieve well and have the same access to a good range of experiences. Partnerships have a positive impact on the work of the centre. Communication with local schools is effective. Multi-agency working to support families ensures consistent support for families in need. Provision is beginning to be offered in partnership with other agencies and at other localities to offer better access for families in the wider reach area.

Resources are used effectively to encourage learning and development. Staff are well utilised and provide a good range of activities. Combined with good outcomes for service users the centre provides good value for money. A wide range of high quality play equipment, toys and books are used well by children. The centre is planning to remodel its accommodation to create a better flow and utilisation of its resources. Outdoor play areas are particularly noteworthy and ensure good access to fresh air and a feeling of space and tranquillity.

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	2
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	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services the centre has been commissioned to provide	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages the wider community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	3

Any other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance 'Complaining about inspections', which is available from our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk. If you would like us to send you a copy of the guidance, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

Summary for centre users

We inspected Abbey Green Children's Centre on 19-20 May 2011. We judged the centre as good overall. We visited a number of activities, looked at the centre's plans and documents and had discussions with some of you and with staff and other professionals.

Thank you for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to talk to us about your children's centre. Your views were very helpful to the inspection. Many of you told us that the staff are friendly, welcoming and supportive. We agree.

The main job of a children's centre is to bring all the services for children and families to work together in your best interests. Abbey Green Children's Centre does this well. By working together with partners such as health professionals, safety advisers and Jobcentre Plus, you are provided with a range of support and courses to ensure there are good opportunities to learn how to lead a healthy life and to be more confident.

One of you expressed the views of a number when she said 'if there were more places like this people would be doing a lot better'. Some of you told us that taking part in the centre's activities has given you the opportunity to make new friends, learn new skills and not feel so alone. Particularly helpful has been the support provided through programmes on developing your English language skills and understanding how to better ensure the safety of your children. Many of you have valued the support provided by health professionals and the centre staff in helping you maintain breastfeeding. Children who use the centre make good progress in their learning and development.

We saw how much you and your children enjoy the activities in the centre, including those opportunities to play, learn and have fun together, and especially the support provided to those of you developing your English language skills. We found that the work of the centre in supporting children to develop their communication and language skills was good, especially their knowledge of letters and sounds. To

further support those families whose knowledge of English is limited we have asked the centre to extend these activities.

The people in charge of running the centre are doing a really good job. The children's centre manager works extremely hard to make sure that everything the centre does for you will make a difference to the area in which you live. She makes sure that everyone who works at Abbey Green Children's Centre share this strong commitment. We heard many examples from you about how they are all making a real difference to your lives. The whole family is at the heart of what everyone is doing and this is seen in the high quality of the individual support that is provided and the range of activities that can be accessed either in the centre or in other local provision.

The governing body and senior leaders are committed to making a difference to your lives and the families in the local area. The centre uses a variety of information on the impact of the wide range of its services, but the new governing body is not yet experienced enough to challenge the centre to improve the services offered to more of you. We have asked the centre to ensure that they develop the governors' skills so that they are more able to push for improvements to these services in the future.

We would like to wish you, your children and the families in the Manningham area the best for the future.

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