

Inspection report for Belfield Children's Centre

Local authority	Rochdale
Inspection number	367747
Inspection dates	15–16 June 2011
Reporting inspector	Janet Glover

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Rachael El weshahi
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Belfield Community School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Belfield Playgroup URN316394

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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under Section 3 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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, health professionals, local community partners, advisory board members, governing body representatives, local authority representatives, user groups and parents who use the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its business plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre.

Information about the centre

Belfield Children's Centre is a single story refurbished building which is co-located within Belfield Community School. There is a registered playgroup on site. The children's centre was initially developed as part of the Belfield, Hamer and Wardleworth Sure Start Local programme. It became a phase two children's centre in July 2007. The Belfield area has a high concentration of recent migrants from South Asia who have been identified as living in the most overcrowded conditions, in poor quality, older terraced housing. There are 270 White British, 111 Bangladeshi and 181 Pakistani families registered with the centre.

The neighbourhood has a distinctively young population. The number of children per family is significantly above the national average. Children's skills, knowledge and

abilities on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are below those expected for their age. In November 2010, 6.4% of people aged between 16 and 64 and who live within the centre’s reach area claimed Job Seekers Allowance. The levels of deprivation within the Lower Super Output Area in the area are all within the 20% most deprived in England, three are within the 10% most deprived, and one is within the 3% most deprived. The centre is governed by the local authority and the advisory board takes on roles and responsibilities for improving the centre and outcomes for children. The centre provides the full core offer.

Inspection judgements

Grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Overall effectiveness

The effectiveness of the children’s centre in meeting the needs of and improving outcomes for users and the wider community

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Belfield Children’s Centre provides a satisfactory range of services for the children and families who use it. Outcomes are satisfactory for children and adult users. It provides support in developing healthy lifestyles and is supporting economic well-being. The centre successfully coordinates a wide range of initiatives to promote healthy lifestyles, including cooking skills and advice about nutrition and weight management.

Safeguarding arrangements protect children, families and users satisfactorily and all appropriate local authority requirements are in place. Users state that they feel safe and support is provided to help them understand how to keep their children safe. The centre’s early years provision was inspected simultaneously and was found to be satisfactory.

The centre satisfactorily meets the needs of its users. Parents and carers state that they enjoy the activities and programmes on offer. Families and individuals are supported to find family learning and vocational courses within the locality, to help them gain a range of skills and improve their future employment prospects. A number of parents and carers have moved on to roles within the co-located school after attending courses in the centre. Unfortunately due to recent efficiency measures the local college can no longer provide sessions at the centre.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory within the centre and families are able to access a range of services which provide them with helpful information about career choices, benefit claims and job vacancies. Parents and carers value the parenting courses, which they say have developed their confidence in managing their children's behaviour and providing a calmer environment in the home. For the families who are most vulnerable due to their circumstances, outreach work has been effective in bringing together a range of agencies to offer a coordinated package of support.

The centre manager has a satisfactory understanding of the locality she manages and provides appropriate support and guidance to her team. The advisory board is made up of core partners and two parent/carer representatives. The composition of this group is being reviewed to ensure that it reflects the full range of representatives using the centre. More parent/carer representatives are needed to ensure the diversity of the community is covered as there is currently no parent forum or group. The centre had recognised that the advisory board needs more guidance and support in fulfilling its role and training has been arranged for all its members. The advisory board contributes to the centre's self-evaluation and business planning but does not provide sufficient scrutiny and challenge to assess how effectively the centre's work is impacting on outcomes for children and families.

The centre has good relationships with its core partners. There is a strong relationship with the co-located school and the centre lead has become its chair of governors. Professionals from different agencies work well together and effectively transfer information between key partners, ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable families are quickly met. The effective use of the Common Assessment Framework across the partners enhances the speed and efficiency with which individual needs can be met. However, these partnerships are not yet fully integrated and agencies and organisations from the wider community are yet to be engaged with the centre.

The centre has developed a strong partnership with HMP Buckley Hall. It delivers a seven week programme to a small cohort of male prisoners who have children under five years of age. The programme introduces play and learning, giving fathers the opportunity to explore and create a wide range of activities that they can do with their own children. The seventh lesson sees families of these prisoners visiting so that they can test out what they have learnt. This work has achieved national acclaim for the centre.

Equality and diversity is promoted satisfactorily. There have been changes in the profile of the locality as many more families from minority ethnic groups are being re-housed or move into the locality. Users who have had a lengthy involvement with the centre services speak positively of the difference the support and activities have made to their lives and how aspirations have been raised. For example, the centre has enabled many local women of Asian background to access English language courses and receive advice and support which they cannot access elsewhere. The withdrawal of some of these learning programmes from the centre has had a significant impact on Asian women and many are now accessing other centres to

meet their needs.

The centre leader and her team are aware of many of the issues currently facing the centre. The self-evaluation process and supporting development plan lacks rigour and a clear focus on individual issues. The targets identified are not specific or measurable and have no clear ownership. There is little use of impact data on their formation. The local authority is aware of this weakness and an action plan is in place to rectify it, but it is too early to evaluate its impact.

There is a widening understanding of what needs to take place to further improve the services that the centre offers. Substantial support is provided by the local authority. Belfield Children's Centre is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has a clear picture of what it needs to do to improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve the effectiveness and rigour of self-evaluation to set clear and challenging targets and ensure that there is routine reflection on practice to inform the children's centre development plan.
- Monitor the quality of provision more systematically so that:
 - the centre is fully aware of the quality of both directly provided and commissioned services and activities.
 - action can be taken where needed to improve the quality of provision and ensure it meets the needs of users including those from minority ethnic groups.
- Develop and maintain governance and accountability arrangements by improving the participation of parents and carers to better represent the community and effectively challenge the centre.
- Build on existing partnership arrangements to ensure that all partners are aware of and work together cohesively to meet the targets set by the centre.
- Ensure that assessment and evaluation is sharply linked to the impact of services on the outcomes to users and informs planning for future developments.
- Communicate and signpost the centre's work more effectively with the wider community and to those groups in the reach area not yet accessing services.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

Outcomes for the children and families who use the centre are satisfactory. Families enjoy and respond well to healthy cooking courses that are encouraging them to provide healthy meals for their families. A young parents' and carers' group demonstrated how to make chicken fajitas and talked about how they were trying out new things at home and with their children. A dental health professional visits regularly to promote healthy teeth and gives out free toothpaste and brushes to all children and families in the centre. Healthy snacks are provided and children are

offered milk or water during the day. The centre has successfully gained the 'Golden Grin' award for its promotion of healthy eating. Although breastfeeding rates remain low the centre is actively promoting it with a weekly support session provided by a health care partner. However, health professionals are not working towards the centre targets and see their role, although supportive, as being separate from that of the centre. Fathers are encouraged to take up exercise through a gym programme. The outdoor facilities are good, with opportunities to offer 'forest school' activities during school holidays.

Parents, carers and children state that they feel safe. Child protection is given a suitably high priority. All staff have undertaken appropriate safeguarding training, which is regularly updated. Staff are trained in first aid, and paediatric first aid courses are run for parents and carers. One parent stated that the training has equipped her with skills and confidence to keep her children safe. Risk assessments are undertaken for all activities and for different parts of the centre depending on their use.

Good reciprocal links have been established with local early years and childcare providers, including childminders. They promote the centre's work to parents and carers, and use the activities offered by the centre to enhance the children's and their own learning. The settings have also worked well in partnership with the centre to provide places for two-year-olds whose families have benefited from the provision of respite care. Parents and carers say that when attending courses, they are confident to leave their children with well-trained crèche workers. They say they know they can focus on their own learning as the children will be safe and well cared for. There is a popular 'time for you' crèche that is well attended and allows early years staff to observe children and begin to prepare learning journeys to share their development. A 'let's get ready' crèche is provided each week to help prepare age-appropriate children for transition to school in September. The centre has recognised that a number of children have not accessed the 15 hours support provided to aid and prepare children for transition to school. The schools state that where children have attended the centre's provision, they come with more confidence and have fewer attachment issues than those who do not access the support.

The centre uses the Common Assessment Framework well to support a wide range of children, some of whom have additional learning needs or disabilities. The centre has a good relationship with the portage specialist service and they work closely with individual children to promote independence. Sessions are planned to support children's development based on the Early Years Foundation Stage. Observations are undertaken during the sessions and useful feedback provided to parents. However, the centre does not track children's progress over time to demonstrate the impact of its provision on outcomes.

Most children in the sessions observed showed satisfactory understanding of the needs of others. Staff treat all with respect and this is generally reflected by parents and carers. Users are given the opportunity to comment on the sessions they have attended. There is a local authority annual survey of all provision which feeds into

their 'annual conversation' with the centre. The centre has a notice board for parents and carers and a 'You said, We did' board. However, with no parent forum/group and only two parent representatives on the advisory board, the centre is reviewing its board make-up and training is to be provided on governance. Due to efficiency cuts within and across services, the centre is currently experiencing a time of transition as it adjusts to a reduced income. The centre is fully supported by the local authority. New ways of working are being explored to ensure that the core offer can continue to be provided to bring about significant impact for all of its users.

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

Centre staff respond very effectively to referrals from partner agencies for support for families in crisis. Whether this means support for housing, access to healthy living advice, or supporting victims of domestic violence, the staff have good knowledge of the best means of tackling difficulties. Close working between family and centre workers ensures that the support is sustained over time whilst building up individuals' confidence and increasing their independence. Sensitive observation and discussion often raise details of further underlying needs that lead to more well-targeted support and guidance. The assessment of children's needs during the crèche is used to ensure that appropriate multi-agency support is provided for families in need. Existing users receiving these services value them, highlighting increased confidence socially and managing their children's behaviour as benefits gained. As a result of these interventions, one parent stated: 'My life has changed completely. I'm a lot more happy and confident and so are my children.'

Efficiency measures within family learning and adult education have resulted in there being no classes or programmes currently available at the centre. The centre has a record of offering parents and carers a range of accredited and non-accredited programmes. Family learning programmes had enabled users to develop literacy,

numeracy and language skills, in particular access to English speaking sessions. Many Asian women in the locality have English as an additional language, and have arrived in the area with poor or no literacy skills even in their own first language. The centre has, however, plans to gain its own accreditation to run programmes, such as English speaking, to ensure this group of users are not disengaged or discriminated against. There is a weakness in the quality of records kept of the achievements of adults whom the centre does signpost to other provision, such as adult learning. No overall records are gathered for those who obtain work or qualifications through courses to which they are directed. The centre does not know how many parents and carers are improving their economic stability and independence through its referrals.

The quality of care, guidance and support is satisfactory. There is a range of information, advice and guidance available in the centre. Users attending the centre are able to access a wide range of services and support. Home-start Rochdale is an essential part of the support network and works closely with the centre to ensure that the best possible support is available. Case studies show how swift interventions through good outreach work and a multi-agency approach have improved outcomes for families. There is a weekly support session with the Citizens' Advice Bureau where data is collected on outcomes. A fortnightly session with Job Centre Plus takes place: however, there is no collection or analysis of how many access services and what is the impact of this on worklessness. Little analysis is made of the impact of services across the centre or through partner organisations. Although 88% of families have signed up to the centre, currently only 56% are regularly engaged in activities or programmes. There is little targeted work being undertaken to engage fully with the wider community and build up relationships with agencies and organisations that represent it.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all users	3
The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of users and the wider community	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to users within the centre and the wider community	3
How effective are the leadership and management?	3

Overall leadership and management are satisfactory. The local authority provides regular support. It is developing its role of challenging and holding the centre to account for impact upon outcomes through the 'annual conversation'. Staff working at the centre are well managed. They are clear about lines of responsibility and value the supervision sessions with their manager as these provide them with opportunities to discuss and seek guidance on complex cases. The centre's accommodation is used to maximum effect, with staff 'hot-desking' when in the centre. The use of the centre

is well planned and staff are effective in supporting a variety of activities and programmes and providing satisfactory value for money.

An advisory board meets quarterly which is made up of partner organisations and two parent/carer representatives. There are plans in place to address the imbalance on the board of parents/carers to professionals and training is to be provided to equip them with the appropriate skills to govern and challenge the centre. Although a wide range of data is available, the centre does not effectively analyse it to demonstrate how well services and provision are accessed and its impact on users. Areas for improvement are not systematically identified and fed into the self-evaluation process in order to give the centre's development plan identifiable and measurable targets.

Staff work hard to promote positive images of all groups and challenge stereotypes through centre displays and literature. Users are encouraged to widen their knowledge and understanding of other cultures through activities and introduction of less familiar foods. The centre's work with HMP Buckley Hall is exemplary and resulted in an invitation for centre representatives to talk about the work they do at Buckingham Palace. This partnership with the prison has allowed a number of prisoners to explore play and learning that they can use during visiting times or on release. The centre supports the crèche during many visitors' days to help families engage better with their children.

Users are protected satisfactorily with all recruitment procedures meeting safeguarding requirements. The centre ensures all staff are subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks, including those from agencies who work with centre users. The local authority's recruitment policies and procedures on safeguarding are followed when appointing staff. Lone worker policies are in place and safeguarding training is up-dated annually. Some families are still proving difficult to engage and the centre is looking at new ways of introducing them to the centre through other parents and carers. The centre lacks clear tracking information to gain a better understanding of which families access the services and how frequently.

There are few strategies in place to effectively evaluate all of the work of the centre. Users' views are collected in a variety of ways but these are not sufficiently well analysed to inform the future direction of services. Although there are good relationships with partners and carers, there is no systematic review of their services and their impact on families and users. The centre understands that there are still gaps in its engagement of the wider community. It is clear that stronger links with other local agencies and organisations, including faith leaders, are needed to fully represent this locality. The centre understands that the large numbers of families from south Asia moving into the locality will have an impact on service requirements and plans are currently being agreed to address this.

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

Any 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

My colleague and I inspected Belfield Children's Centre on 15–16 June 2011. We judged the centre to be satisfactory.

We know from the discussions we had with you and the feedback on the forms you filled in that you are pleased with the services you access. You think that the centre staff work hard to help you to improve your skills and confidence as parents and to promote healthy lifestyles. We heard how much you and your children have benefited from the 'cook and eat' sessions; these have helped you improve your families' diet and encouraged new foods.

You told us how much you have gained from attending the 'stay and play' sessions and how these enable you to meet people. Many of you have arrived here not being able to speak English well and have found support and guidance in accessing suitable classes to help you improve your skills of speaking English. The work that the centre is doing with HM Prison Buckley Hall is very valuable and has gained

recognition nationally, resulting in the manager visiting Buckingham Palace. The activities offered are helping these fathers to gain skills which are useful to understand how to deal with your children's behaviour. We heard how your confidence in your abilities has grown and in some cases has led to some of you gaining jobs in the co-located school.

Arrangements are in place for keeping everyone safe when they are at the centre. All the partnership agencies attached to the centre work well together so that when families do have difficulties you are provided with the help and support you need to improve the situation.

There are two of you who are members of the advisory board and the centre wants many more of you to represent the community in which you live. The centre has been asked to increase the numbers of parents and carers on the board and to set up a parents' and carers' forum so that they can better collect your views and ideas.

Some of the information about the services the centre offers is not collected regularly enough and it does not contain enough detail to help the centre to assess how well it is performing. Consequently, we have asked the centre to analyse the information it collects better so that services can continue to improve and meet your needs. We have also asked the centre to review more thoroughly all the information available to show how well the centre is helping you and your children. This will help to set the priorities for the centre's work in the future. The centre is requested to strengthen and widen its work in the community by working more closely with organisations, agencies and individuals, including faith leaders.

Thank you to everyone who took time to come and speak with us or provided information for us. We are very grateful for your involvement in the inspection and wish you all every success.

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