

Inspection report for Clearbury Children's Centre

Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	365766
Inspection dates	6–7 July 2011
Reporting inspector	Wendy Ratcliff HMI

Centre governance	Spurgeons
Centre leader	Alison Wray
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	None
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Giant Steps Nursery

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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 is the first inspection of the centre. This inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with the head of centre, interim centre coordinator, members of the advisory group, staff, a local authority representative, and partner agencies, including representatives from the health service. They had informal discussions with parents and children, and visited sessions in the community.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations and data about people who use the centre.

Inspection judgements

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

Information about the centre

Clearbury Children's Centre was designated in 2007. The charity Spurgeons has been contracted by the local authority to manage the centre and its governance. The centre has recently undergone a change in management and a staff reorganisation. Spurgeons has been running the centre since April 2011. The head of centre oversees two other centres in the 'ABC' cluster and an interim centre co-ordinator has been in post since April 2011. The children's centre covers a large geographical area. The centre serves one of the 70% most deprived areas in the country. The majority area is rural and is located to the north of the village of Downton on the Wiltshire/Hampshire border. There are pockets of higher need and levels of deprivation in the area. The local population is mostly White British, with smaller percentages of other minority ethnic groups. Around 10% of children under five in

the area are living in workless households. In 2010, around 92% of children achieved a total of at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage Profile. However, in some of the higher deprivation areas, lower scores are achieved, particularly in communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development.

The centre is open all year round on weekdays from 9.00am to 5.00pm. The centre is a purpose-built building within the grounds of Trafalgar secondary school. The parent forum has been re-launched as 'Footprints for Parents' and a local advisory board is in place. The centre offers a range of services, which includes integrated childcare, health services, family support and outreach, and provides signposting to Jobcentre Plus. Giant Steps day nursery, a privately owned setting, offers childcare for children under eight. It is open from 8.00am to 6.00pm each weekday for 51 weeks of the year. The centre works within partnership with two other children's centres in the cluster.

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

Overall effectiveness of Clearbury Children's Centre is satisfactory with some good features. The centre has undergone significant change to the leadership and management in recent months. During this period, staff have maintained a satisfactory level of service to its users and shared resources with neighbouring centres to ensure those with the greatest need continued to receive outreach support. The new leadership and management demonstrate a clear vision for the overall improvement of provision and this is shared by a highly enthusiastic staff team. The team are keen to provide the best possible provision for users within the reach area. The new leaders have already identified the centre's strengths and areas for development, such as increasing the number of vulnerable families or families from the more disadvantaged areas who access services. They recognise that more needs to be done to reach out to these families.

The local authority and other partners provide the centre with some useful data about the reach area. The senior leadership team are becoming more efficient when using available data to target services in the community for specific groups and carrying out analysis in order to establish the impact of a particular service for its users. For example, the recent data for the Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores have been broken down to identify the pockets in the reach area where

targeted support is required for communication, language and literacy and personal, social and emotional development. The positive impact of the 'Friday Fun' session is beginning to be seen. There are systems in place to evaluate services, including those run in partnership with others. However, this information is not yet analysed systematically. Leaders have devised systems to measure the impact of improving outcomes for all groups over time but the information they need to demonstrate this impact is not yet in place. As a result, the centre's capacity to improve further is satisfactory because there is a trend for improvement and systems are in place, but these are not yet fully embedded to show the impact on improving outcomes.

Care, guidance and support are a strength as centre staff have a good understanding of the needs of those accessing the centre's services. Friendly and approachable staff have successfully built high levels of trust amongst users, who feel nurtured and well supported. Parents and carers value the welcoming, safe environment it offers and the good quality services it provides. The range of services is designed to meet the needs of the increasing number of families who are accessing the centre. Users are responding well to activities such as 'Music bugs' and 'Yoga and Play'. Those families who are experiencing a change in circumstance that might present as a barrier to improving their lives feel the centre is a safe place. Parents made very positive comments, such as 'It's been my lifeline'. Safeguarding is seen as a high priority and is a particular strength of the centre. All staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of safeguarding procedures. There are some secure partnerships that exist with other agencies to ensure the needs of users are met. Staff complete a Common Assessment Framework (CAF) referral when families are considered to need specific help and support.

Health outcomes are good and improving. Families use universal services such as the baby clinic and specialist services such as speech and language therapy. Feedback from users confirms children have the opportunity to try different foods and are gaining an understanding of keeping healthy. Multisport activities were successful in engaging parents and children in understanding that physical exercise promotes a healthy lifestyle. Breastfeeding rates are higher than the local authority average, but the centre has identified that in higher deprivation areas, support is required. As a result, breastfeeding support is to be provided in Laverstock. The centre holds events such as home safety week and road safety week. Such events are helping users to keep their families safe in the home and children are developing a good understanding of how to cross roads safely. Health visitors refer families who require additional support to the centre. Outreach workers work closely with these families and provide specific support, including help with completing forms to access benefits and issues relating to re-housing. Such support is helping families to increase their economic stability.

The centre is inclusive and users benefit from positive relationships as they and centre staff treat each other with respect and consideration. Users' views about activities are sought through discussion and questionnaires. Parents feel their views are heard and are keen to suggest that they would like more physical activities. The centre has just re-launched the parent forum in order for parents to be more

involved in shaping services and the governance of the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Work together with the local authority and partners to improve the quality of data available in order to:
 - more precisely assess the needs of the community to target services for specific groups, particularly the most vulnerable and those in need of support
 - fully evaluate the effectiveness of services
 - track the impact the services are having on outcomes for users.
- Develop the parent forum in order to engage users in shaping services and the governance of the centre.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The centre is at an early stage of evaluating the impact of its work and, as a result, the evidence is limited. However, where it is available, it demonstrates the positive contribution the centre is making to improve the outcomes for its users through good quality services. High regard is given to promoting safety at the centre and at community settings and, as a result, children and families feel safe when accessing services. Parents have developed a greater understanding of first aid through attending first aid and baby resuscitation courses. Some users are gaining confidence and feel prepared to become parents when they attend the 'Prepare for Parenting course'. They are developing an awareness of home safety and benefit from the fire safety service carrying out home visits to install smoke alarms. Effective partnership working ensures that those who are experiencing a crisis can access the necessary support. For example, the parent support advisor introduces families to centre activities in order for them not to become isolated.

Parents show a greater understanding of the benefits of physical exercise in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Sessions such as 'Yoga and Play' are valued by the parents as it provides opportunity for their children's physical and mental wellbeing. Staff have received input from mental health professionals in identifying early signs of depression in order to signpost families to appropriate services. Children are gaining a greater understanding of the benefits of healthy eating as they enjoy healthy snacks at the Morgan's Vale after-school club. The centre's focus on maintaining a healthy lifestyle has recently been recognised as it has gained the Healthy Settings Award.

Children actively engage in and enjoy the variety of activities available across the group sessions. Parents value the 'Music Bugs' sessions and enthusiastically participate and involve their baby or child in the singing activities. During group

sessions, staff are good role models and encourage parents to engage in their children's learning. However, in some sessions, fewer parents choose to become involved and parents are not always clear about learning outcomes of particular activities. Parents have noticed that their children are learning to share and take turns. There is a warm and welcoming atmosphere and parents say they do not feel judged by others as they attempt to deal with their child's temper tantrum. The centre is not yet fully evaluating the impact activities are having as children start school.

Staff are incorporating 'Every Child a Talker' (ECAT) into their planning and this is beginning to have a positive effect. For example, staff have helped a childminder to use 'ECAT' and this is improving the speech and language of minded children. The Early Years Advisory Teacher is working with early years providers in the area and attends transition meetings at the local schools to help with a smoother transition into school. The parent forum has been re-launched in order to provide a more systematic way of seeking users' views in order to shape services. Many families are registered with the centre and are accessing services. The centre is looking at ways to increase the number of families it reaches, particularly in the more deprived areas and those from their target groups, such as fathers and lone parent families. Secure systems are in place for health professionals to refer families who require additional support. Outreach workers are key when working with such families and build trusting relationships so families feel able to engage with other professionals to access help. There are no children currently subject to a child protection plan accessing services and few children with a CAF. Children with special educational needs and/or disabilities benefit from the centre's stimulating sensory room, including the children who attend Giant Steps Nursery.

The centre provides parents with information about childcare in the area. Parents have access to a computer to find out about jobs. Some support is provided for a few families for benefit information and signposting for debt management services. The centre is establishing links with TABS training in order to provide free courses for adults to develop their literacy and numeracy skills.

These are the grades for the outcomes for users

The extent to which children, including those from vulnerable groups, are physically, mentally and emotionally healthy and families have healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which children are safe and protected, their welfare concerns are identified and appropriate steps taken to address them	2
The extent to which all users enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	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	3

parents are developing economic stability and independence including access to training	
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How good is the provision?

2

There is a range of good quality services and activities which are matched to the needs of the current users. The centre works in partnership with other agencies to ensure they support the CAF process for individual users and assist in signposting appropriate services. Outreach workers complete clear assessments on the families they work with. This tailored one-to-one support is making a difference for the small numbers of families engaged in this service. For example, parents are supported to attend medical appointments and workers help families make an appeal about a school place so a child can attend the same school as its siblings. The new provider has identified a more focused system for reviewing the work with families in order to ensure outcomes are being achieved and tracked, which builds on the systems in place with the previous provider.

The centre is reaching many families and is appropriately using the data provided by the local authority in order to target services in the areas of most need. The centre is beginning to locate and engage users in the most deprived areas, through groups such as 'Friday Fun'. Data has not always been used effectively and some groups have been started based on an identified need from other professionals. On occasions, this has resulted in groups not being sustained due to low numbers, such as 'Let's Talk' and the 'Thrifty Tips' course. Staff are beginning to analyse data and, with partners, use their local knowledge of the area in order to be more effective when targeting services. For example, in partnership with the local health visitor, staff have identified the need to hold the health clinic in the community so those in the most deprived area can access health services.

The Early Years Advisory Teacher has worked closely with staff at the centre to develop planning for group sessions and activities to meet the needs of the children. Sessions are now being planned around particular themes, linked to areas of learning and the ECAT programme. For example, during the stay and play element of the Thursday session, the play worker planned to celebrate a child's birthday, linking this to knowledge and understanding of the world. This focused planning ensures sessions and activities are promoting learning and development, ensuring the enjoyment of users, and, as a result, the impact on outcomes is beginning to be seen. Users enjoy the services provided by the centre and feel welcomed and valued by the staff. The quality of care at Giant Steps Nursery is outstanding and a few children benefit from this care when they access two-year-old funding.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The effectiveness of the assessment of the needs of children, parents and other users	
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3

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	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

Whilst there has been a recent change in provider, the new governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood. The advisory board has continued and meet regularly. They are presented with information in order to make decisions about services that are being provided, for example agreeing to targeted breast feeding support and to work in partnership with TABS training to establish courses for adult learning. There are clear links between strategic planning and service provision; for example, the local authority is providing joint training for all children's centres on Webster Stratton, a parenting programme. The day-to-day management of the centre is well organised and the centre's activities run smoothly. Individuals are clear about their new roles and responsibilities, with some appointments still to be made. Staff work enthusiastically as a team and are passionate about their work. They know the area well and what they need to do next.

The leadership team has used available resources and data to identify gaps in the service, such as users' access to adult learning, and has plans to increase the number of vulnerable families and different groups accessing the centre. During the transition to the new provider, and with staff shortages, the centre has shared resources well with the other centres to ensure services such as outreach continued for those families with identified need. The self-evaluation process is enabling the centre leaders to reflect on the services being offered and to demonstrate some evidence of impact on outcomes for users. Leaders know the centre's strengths and have set priorities for improvement. These priorities include measurable targets, and monitoring systems are being established in order for the centre to demonstrate the impact of services on outcomes for users.

The centre has access to data about the local area, including 'live birth' data that is received sporadically. The centre is looking at how it uses this information in order to reach more families. The centre is also collecting its own data through the 'eStart' programme, which it uses to measure the number of families they are reaching from specific groups. The numbers of fathers, lone parents, families on workless benefits and those from minority ethnic groups are small. Safeguarding is a strength, as practices are rigorous and robust. Staff show a clear understanding of safeguarding policies and training is up to date, although all staff are due to attend further training provided by Spurgeons to further enhance this practice. Many protocols are in place to ensure the safeguarding of users. However, the centre do not regularly receive up

to date information about families in the reach who are subject to child protection plans and may benefit from accessing specific services at the centre. This is being explored at a strategic level by Spurgeons and the local authority.

The centre is actively promoting equality and diversity through a range of resources that depict positive images. They are recognising the target groups in the community and are beginning to use this information to be more specific in targeting services. The establishment of groups in the community, such as Old Sarum, are having a positive impact on community cohesion. Most partnerships are established and working well. Partners value the centre's resource, and space is used well by others for meetings such as multi-professional meetings held by the inclusion officer for those children with specific needs. The school nurse holds weekly sessions at the centre for young people attending the secondary school. During these confidential sessions, young people gain an understanding of keeping healthy and safe as they find out about contraception, mental health issues and support to stop smoking. Staff have worked well with the 'Shine Bus' in order to reach families in the traveller community. A few families now attend the after-school sessions at Morgan's Vale. Users are seen as important partners and the centre has recognised that more needs to be done to engage them in shaping services and the governance of the centre.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The extent to which governance, accountability, professional supervision and day to day management arrangements are clear and understood	2
The extent to which ambitious targets drive improvement, provision is integrated and there are high expectations for users and the wider community	3
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of users and the wider community	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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Clearbury Children's Centre on 6 and 7 July 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall but recognise that some aspects of its provision are good.

Your children's centre provides you with an attractive, safe environment where you and your children feel well cared for and valued. Those of you that we spoke to told us that you really enjoy the range of activities on offer, from drop-in groups such as 'Bumps to Babies', 'Music Bugs' and 'Yoga and Play'. We also spoke to some of you at groups that take place in the community, such as the after-school club at Morgan's Vale. You told us that the children enjoy the range of activities available and the healthy snack helps them gain a better understanding of healthy lifestyles. You also like being able to meet up with other parents and carers, to share ideas.

From our observations, discussions and case studies, we were able to see that the centre is having a positive impact on your lives. We found that the care, guidance and support that staff offer you is good. Staff work well as a team and are committed to helping you make positive changes in your lives. Outcomes for users are satisfactory overall, but are improving. The staff are working well in supporting you and your families to improve your health. You told us how you valued the multisport activities and would like more opportunities to participate in physical activity. The first aid and baby resuscitation courses have helped you gain a greater understanding of how to deal with accidents in the home.

Those in charge have set targets in order to continue to improve the range of services they provide so they can reach even more families in the community, particularly those who may be feeling more vulnerable. They have developed some secure partnerships with other professionals and organisations in order to improve the lives of you all, for example with health visitors to establish a clinic in Old Sarum. They are looking to strengthen and establish new partnerships with some organisations in order to provide you with opportunities to access courses to develop literacy and numeracy skills, which may lead to work-related training courses. Partnerships with key agencies are established so they can offer the correct support and guidance, for example to help you access services for your children with additional needs.

Safeguarding procedures are good and staff know what to do to ensure you and your children are safe. For example, staff are trained in how to safeguard children and leaders make sure that all those working in the centre are suitable to do so. Staff have recently made changes to the centre foyer in order that the children are safe. The temporary gate extension ensures children do not have access to the front

door that leads onto the car park. Staff also ensure that any risks in the community venues are minimised.

We know that the centre staff encourage you to evaluate the activities and share your views about the sessions you attend. We noticed that some of you were involved in the launch of 'Footprints for Parents', which is the re-launch of the parent forum. The centre is looking to more systematically seek your views and engage you in shaping services and the decision-making processes. We could see the children's centre is establishing itself in the community and is promoting an inclusive environment so you all feel welcome. One parent told us how those at the centre do not judge, particularly when dealing with children's behaviour, such as temper tantrums.

The centre receives some useful information from the local authority and partners about the area it serves. It is also collecting information from you and partners about some activities. We have asked the centre to look at this range of information in order to more precisely target services, such as the breastfeeding support that is planned at Laverstock, to evaluate the effectiveness the services provided and to show the difference these services are having on your lives.

We would like to thank the centre users for speaking with us and contributing to the inspection at Clearbury Children's Centre.

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