

Inspection report for Filton Children's Centre

Local authority	South Gloucestershire
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Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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.

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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 inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre leader, centre staff and representatives from the advisory board and the local authority. Inspectors met with a number of representatives of services who work through the children's centre, including health visitors, midwives, childminders and early years staff. Inspectors spoke to groups of parents and carers. They observed the centre's work and reviewed a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Filton Children's Centre is located within the Filton ward and also covers a large area of Frenchay and Stoke Park, as well as some of Stoke Gifford. Filton is one of the 10% most deprived wards in South Gloucestershire. There are 1,011 children aged 0-4 within the reach area, of which 573 live in the areas considered to be the most deprived. Filton Children's Centre, is a phase 2 centre designated since December 2007. The proportion of children from black minority ethnic groups is slightly lower than the national average but much higher than South Gloucestershire as a whole. The area serves a predominantly White, mainly British community, with the largest minority ethnic communities comprising Indian and other Asian, dual heritage Caribbean, and Black African people.

The centre delivers the full core offer of services. Day care is not provided on site, but the centre has links with a number of childminders and nursery providers to which it directs parents. Some services are offered by the other children's centres locally, to which families from the Filton reach area have access. The centre is managed on a day-to-day basis by a Development Leader who works very closely with the Strategic Lead for Extended Schools and Children's Centres in South Gloucestershire. The centre leader and most of the staff work across three children's centres, including Filton.

The proportion of families living in households dependent on workless benefits is higher than for the authority as a whole, and the second highest in South Gloucestershire but the centre serves a community where the percentage of children from 0-4 years living in poverty is much lower than the national average. There are higher-than-average levels of obesity amongst Reception children, and a high number of hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries in comparison with the rest of South Gloucestershire. The majority of children enter early years provision with a range of skills and abilities typically expected for their age. The range of activities offered by the centre includes two targeted services, one for disabled children and their parents, and one for young mothers. The centre also provides one-to-one provision for families needing specific support and some parenting programmes. The majority of the provision is universal, and includes a number of stay and play sessions each week and some services delivered by health staff, such as ante-natal and post-natal care.

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

Filton Children's Centre provides satisfactory services to meet the needs of its children and families. Children and adults feel safe and secure at the centre. However, while the centre provides good care, guidance and support for those who use it, it is less successful in reaching out to the wider community. Evaluations show that centre users experience high levels of satisfaction with services, and that they find the centre a welcoming and supportive environment. The centre although small, is well resourced, with indoor and outdoor play areas. Centre staff are sensitive to the needs of individual users and groups of users. This is reflected by parents, who say using the centre has made a positive difference to themselves and their families.

Although many aspects of the services provided are good the centre is not yet sufficiently successful in making them available to the wider community. At present, there is some evaluation of services directly provided by the centre, and customer satisfaction surveys have been undertaken by the centre staff and by the local authority. However, partners are not sufficiently involved in systematically evaluating

the centre's effectiveness. Views of service users are collected but are not yet analysed in such a way as to plan and target future services. Early Years Foundation Stage profile data is provided by the Early Years Adviser which is used by staff to guide their work with children who use the centre. Staff work effectively in promoting the children's learning and development and there is clear evidence that children who use the centre are well supported and make good progress.

The centre has good local and informal links with partner agencies, some of whom deliver services directly from the centre while the centre signposts to others. However these are not always sufficiently formalised to effect benefits to the wider community, such as with training providers and Jobcentre Plus. The centre focuses very much on the needs of the registered users and is not sufficiently proactive in trying to engage the more vulnerable families, such as those suffering financial hardship.

Health visitors and midwives are the main referrers to the centre, but do not regularly pass on information about all live births, and the centre does not have ready access to information on immunisations and oral health. As a result, whilst the centre responds well to identified needs, there is little targeted preventative work. Within the centre, commitment to equality of opportunity is evident, with a range of resources such as toys and books which reflect ethnicities other than white. However there is little within the resources and displays that reflect the culture and heritage of the centre's Asian families. The ability of centre staff to tailor their support to the individual needs of children and families is evident. For example, a Polish family was well supported by introducing them to services that were specifically suited to their needs. The centre focuses effectively on supporting disabled children and their carers. Staff are well trained and they effectively tailor support to the needs of these families.

The centre leader is well supported by capable staff who are keen to improve the services, especially in providing more targeted services for vulnerable groups. Satisfactory improvements have been made in the light of users' evaluations and in response to data from the local authority about the reach area. The staff are well supported in their work by the advisory board but this group is not yet sufficiently proactive in evaluating the effectiveness of the centre. New management and quality assurance arrangements are ready for use from 1st September 2011 are intended to strengthen the systems of evaluation and ensure more integrated and targeted provision. Although these changes are not yet having an impact on the services provided, they show a secure evaluation of what needs to be done to further improve showing a satisfactory capacity for improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the role of the advisory board so it is more proactive in monitoring and evaluating the centre's provision and in holding it to account by ensuring quality assurance mechanisms are used more effectively.
- Ensure data is used more effectively to plan and target services that engage a greater proportion of the most vulnerable families in the reach area, and evaluate their impact.
- Enhance the evaluation of the centre's effectiveness by working with partners to gather information about outcomes for children and adult users, improving the use of health information to ensure that the impact of health concerns within the reach area can be fully understood and use this to inform future planning.
- Improve opportunities for parents and carers to explore learning and training opportunities and improve their employment prospects.

How good are outcomes for users?

3

The centre has been successful in improving parents and carers' understanding of the importance of developing healthy eating and in achieving a healthy lifestyle. Healthy snacks are provided at sessions held in the centre and enjoyed by children and adults alike. The healthy eating cookery sessions were well received and there is evidence of how this has influenced parents' positive choices. Parents found the activities that promoting dental hygiene informative although the impact on reducing dental decay is hard to measure at present.

The centre has a range of services aimed at supporting new mothers, and is also good at engaging fathers, developing parenting skills and enabling parents are carers to understand how their children learn and develop. Parents who have attended parenting programmes say they have also grown in confidence in managing their children's behaviour. Many parents and carers talked of how the centre is a warm, happy and safe environment where they and their children feel well supported and valued. Parents grow in confidence in this supportive atmosphere and from the good role models of the staff. Midwives and health visitors use the centre to undertake antenatal work and support new parents who feel more confident in continuing breast feeding and using strategies to support weaning.

Staff are effective in highlighting the need for parents to be vigilant in keeping children safe. The centre is a safe environment and safe practices are shared with parents and carers supporting their awareness of possible dangers at home. A range of preventative activities such as road safety awareness for example are promoted amongst centre users who say they are now more aware of possible dangers and how to avoid them.

The centre undertakes some individual work with children and families and case study information demonstrates that vulnerable children and families benefit from the service. One example seen was a parent who is isolated, and attends the centre with her child to provide social interaction for her child, and build her own confidence.

Parents are encouraged to make their views about services known, and there is a parent's forum, with good representation from parents on the advisory board. Children using the centre are making satisfactory progress in their personal, social and emotional development. Parents participate in completing their children's learning journals which chart the progress children are making. The centre is not currently engaged with any children subject to child protection plans or the Common Assessment Framework, although recent casework examples show that support was successful and outcomes from plans were achieved so enabling families to improve their children's wellbeing.

Although no adult training takes place at the centre, the staff responded to a request from parents to invite a training provider to attend and discuss options. This has led to a small number of parents taking up training opportunities, and individual case studies demonstrate that a small number have also been supported into employment.

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 and employment	3

How good is the provision?

3

A satisfactory range of assessments are used at the centre to identify the needs of service users. Some of these are very effective and are used at the beginning and end of provision to identify the impact of the support or learning provided. This particularly applies to parenting programmes. For a number of services however there is no formal assessment of need prior to the planning which makes it difficult for the centre and its partners to evaluate their impact. For example, the levels of

literacy and numeracy in the adult population within the reach area are not assessed and this reduces the impact of any programme of adult learning in terms of meeting the needs of the wider community. Those who use the centre, however, report that activities are highly enjoyable, and this is reflected in the high attendance at Stay and Play sessions in particular, which have recently had to limit their intake.

Centre users are satisfactorily supported in achieving a healthy lifestyle. Healthy snacks are provided at sessions held in the centre. The staff recognise that levels of obesity have increased by 50% in the reach area over the last year and have started to address this concern by the provision of healthy eating cookery sessions. Stay and Play and other sessions provide tailored activities to promote health and safety in response to local data where this is available. For example, the number of decayed, missing or filled teeth in 4/5 year old children in Filton was the highest within South Gloucestershire in a survey undertaken in 2005/6. This has led to the active promotion of dental hygiene. Outreach work provided by the centre is limited although successful with the individual families involved giving support on a wide variety of issues. Centre staff also provide good support for childminders who attend regular groups at the centre.

The quality of care, guidance and support offered by the centre for its users is good but they are less successful in enabling families in the wider community to benefit from this good support. Emotional well-being of families is a priority, and staff are sensitive to the needs of new parents in particular. The role of family information and guidance advisors is effective in supporting individuals who ask for help or support. This is evidenced through a number of case studies in which one-to-one assistance has been provided, either to those who are regular users or who come through the door for the first time. However, very few people access the centre in passing, and although welcoming, safe and friendly within, the centre is not reaching out successfully enough to the wider community to ensure that they can benefit from the range of services offered.

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

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. There are good systems in place to quality assure the work of the centre by the local authority, who demonstrate through their select committee activity that the role and purpose of children's centres is well understood but this has not been sufficiently shared with members of the advisory board. The advisory board is well attended, with a range of professionals and some parents represented, but it is not currently sufficiently well informed to play a strong role in the development of the centre and in challenging its performance.

The centre leader is effective in focusing on areas for improvement and there is an improving trend in the use of data to identify how services should be adapted to meet the needs of users and the wider community. All staff within the centre have clear roles and responsibilities, and each acts as a 'guardian' for a particular area of service delivery. Staff are appropriately qualified to deliver the children's centre services, and the senior leaders ensure that skills are matched to service delivery needs. The Rainbow Group for disabled children, for example, was observed to be very well supported with appropriately skilled and qualified staff. There is an improvement in the centre usage within the last six months but the centre knows more can be achieved by better promotion of its services to the wider community. For registered users the provision is often good but because it needs to further extend its engagement with the wider community the centre offers satisfactory value for money.

All staff have received safeguarding training and have a good understanding of the centre's processes and arrangements in this respect. Staff have also undertaken training in the Common Assessment Framework and understand their role in implementing a 'team around the child' approach so ensuring greater safety and wellbeing for children and their families. Safeguarding arrangements are good, with effective processes in place for recruitment of staff, casual workers and volunteers, as well as other agencies accessing the centre.

There are good relationships within different staff groups who access the centre, but some partnerships are not well embedded at all levels of management. For example, the police have a good community presence, attend the advisory board, and have undertaken some activities with centre users. However there is no data available to provide evidence of the impact of this joint working, for example, on crime rates in the community, or on addressing sensitive areas such as service users experiencing domestic abuse. This has been recognised as a weakness and there are plans to develop assessment and evaluation procedures to ensure that services are more appropriately targeted to meet the needs of users and the wider community.

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	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 other information used to inform the judgements made during this inspection

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Filton Children's Centre on 3-4 August 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you for making us feel welcome and for taking the time to talk to us about your children's centre. Your views have been very helpful to the inspection. Many of you told us that you find the centre to be a warm, happy and safe environment where you and your children feel well supported and valued. We agree. We would also like to thank the professional partners who made the time to talk to us about their work within the centre and in the community.

The main role of a children's centre is to encourage all the services for children and families to work together to meet your needs. Filton Children's Centre does this satisfactorily. Many services provided for the families who access the centre are good but the staff are not yet successfully engaging with many families in the wider community.

We were very pleased to hear from so many of you how well the centre does its job in supporting you and your children, and in helping you to find other services when you need them, such as schools, nurseries or childminders. You told us about the different ways the centre helps to promote healthy lifestyles and many of you appreciate the healthy snacks provided. The Stay and Play activities are well supported and we can see that many of you enjoy the sessions and learn about how your children learn and develop. You also told us about some of the things you would like the centre to do more of, such as summer play schemes, and celebrating important dates in the calendar for different communities, such as Diwali and Chinese New Year.

We also identified some things we would like the centre work on, in particular encouraging more people in the local community to benefit from the services the centre offers. One of the suggestions we have made is to ensure that the children's centre and the other professionals who work in the area should work more closely together to enable this to happen. For example we know that with support from the children's centre some of you have undertaken training activities, and we would like this to be available to more of the community, and to understand how the services you use such as these make a difference to your lives.

Many of you have also found the parenting programmes helpful, you have said that these improve your confidence as parents, and help you to understand better how to keep your children safe. We were told that you have valued the support and advice available from health professionals and the centre staff to help yourself and your children lead a healthier lifestyle. There is evidence that children who use the centre make good progress in their learning and development and we particularly enjoyed seeing the experience journals that many of you had contributed to for your child.

The centre development leader and the staff work very hard and are doing a good job for parents/carers and children who use the centre, but the development leader and the advisory board also have the responsibility of making sure that as many people as possible benefit from the support and friendly atmosphere. We have asked the centre to work more closely with professionals such as the police, the Primary Care Trust and training providers to ensure they all understand how to meet the needs of local children and families and to share information to make this happen. We have also asked them to ensure that they can tell how they make a difference to your lives, and this will be something you can help with.

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

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