

Inspection report for Buckland and Whitfield Children's Centre

Local authority	Kent
Inspection number	367765
Inspection dates	10–11 August 2011
Reporting inspector	Michael Kubiak HMI

Centre governance	The local authority
Centre leader	Vicky O'Riordan
Date of previous inspection	This is the centre's first inspection
Centre address	St Nicholas Church The Linces Dover Kent CT16 2BN
Telephone number	01304 826110
Fax number	Not applicable
Email address	Vicky.o'riordan@kent.gov.uk

Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Umbrella Nursery EY404489

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.

Published: August 2011



The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, work-based learning and skills training, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for looked after children, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at www.ofsted.gov.uk/publications/100024.

To receive regular email alerts about new publications, including survey reports and school inspection reports, please visit our website and go to 'Subscribe'.

Royal Exchange Buildings
St Ann's Square
Manchester
M2 7LA

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.ofsted.gov.uk

No. 100024

© Crown copyright 2011



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 centre users, representatives from the local authority, the centre's advisory board, partner organisations, Jobcentre Plus, early years teachers and volunteers. They also met with the centre's management team and a range of frontline staff. They spoke to centre users formally and informally at various groups.

They observed the centre's work including 'Tumble Time' and 'Book Worms Library' groups, a breastfeeding group and a young parents' support group. Inspectors looked at a range of relevant documentation including the centre's self-evaluation, action plan, service evaluation reports, satisfaction survey results, evidence files and case studies.

Information about the centre

Buckland and Whitfield Children's Centre was designated in 2006 and provides the full core offer. It was previously a 'virtual centre', but secured premises in 2009. It now operates in part of a refurbished church, approximately three miles from Dover town centre. Space at the centre includes a reception area, large multi-purpose room, office, kitchen and toilets. On the first floor there is a multi-purpose training room. There is a wheelchair-accessible toilet available on the ground floor. However, access to the first floor is via a flight of stairs. Additional space is available in the church. There are two outside areas to which the children have access. The centre opens weekdays, from 9.00am to 5.00pm, all year round, with the exception of two weeks over the Christmas and New Year period. Some groups operate on Saturday mornings.

The centre is run by a network manager who has responsibility for three other centres in the district. Staff are employed by the local authority. The centre runs some services directly, either at the centre or at community buildings, and in addition commissions a range of services from local private and voluntary organisations.

A steering group, made up of parents and carers and community partners, governs the work of the centre on behalf of the local authority. This group reports to an advisory board which oversees eight children’s centres in the district. Finance and budgets are organised on a district basis.

The centre’s catchment area is mixed in terms of deprivation. The centre is in an area with Assisted Area status and is a Rural Development Area. The number of children under five living in workless households is above the national average. The local population is mostly White British, with a small percentage of ethnic minority families including those of Nepalese origin. Most children enter early years provision with a much narrower range of skills and abilities than those typically expected for their age. At the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage around 73% of children achieve at least 78 points across the Early Years Foundation Stage, which is lower than average, with communication, language and literacy the weaker area.

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

Buckland and Whitfield Children’s Centre is a good, and improving, centre. An outstanding aspect of the centre is the way in which users enjoy and achieve. Children make outstanding progress in their learning and adults also enjoy their association with the centre and engage well with the activities on offer. Partnership working is strong and staff have a good understanding of the local area. Multi-agency working with a range of partners means that services are coordinated and contribute to meeting the needs of the community. Users value the support they receive from the centre, especially when attending groups. Some of these groups are run by volunteers who are well supported by the centre to undertake this role. Partnerships with some adult education providers are good and the centre is strengthening links with others. Where the links are strongest, users develop good skills to support them in accessing future employment, but the impact is not yet widespread.

The centre provides a safe and welcoming environment for users, and safeguarding is a high priority. Safer recruitment procedures are in place for centre staff,

volunteers and commissioned services. Procedures to safeguard users are good and a range of well-integrated support is available to parents who may require additional assistance to ensure their family is safe. Parents who receive the outreach work benefit from having clear expectations of what the input will achieve.

Partnership working is strong and services are well coordinated so that users receive a good package of support. The centre is well aware of its community and has a strong commitment to equality and diversity. It has forged good links with the Nepalese community. Agencies work closely to provide individual tailored support and this is also having a positive impact in breaking down barriers for users who find it difficult to access the centre. Case studies demonstrate the work the centre has on effectively improving outcomes for users. Parents benefit from a range of courses and training, which often improves their confidence and, as a result, many become volunteers at the centre. Some are successful in going on to obtaining paid employment.

Users' and partners' views about the centre's activities are sought. However, these do not always effectively feed into shaping future services. The parents' forum is not well attended and few parents contribute directly to the steering group or advisory board. The centre does however ensure that their opinions and views are taken forward. Children effectively contribute to the work of the centre through activities, such as choosing the range of outdoor play equipment using stickers on photos, to show their preference.

Leadership of the centre is good overall. The centre is seen as an integral part of the community. Good links have been built with local early years providers which contribute to children's excellent enjoyment and achievement in their learning. Management arrangements are clear and understood and leaders offer good support. The centre's work in engaging hard to reach groups, including teenage parents and fathers, is having a positive impact. The centre has developed a well-thought-out action plan based on its priorities. Evidence books show the positive impact of the centre's work. Regular reviews of services and effective staff deployment support the centre in providing good value for money. There is good team work between the centre and the wider community team of partner agencies and there is a clear commitment by all to improve outcomes for users within the reach area.

The centre is provided with a range of data and this is used to set centre-specific targets in most areas. The centre uses this data to inform their action planning and self-evaluation. Where targets are specific and measurable there is clear evidence of improving outcomes for users. For areas with less defined targets it is more difficult to measure and targets are not specific enough. Evaluations are regularly undertaken at the end of groups and the end of outreach work and feed into the work of the centre. The centre's action plan provides an accurate evaluation and up-to-date picture of the centre and how it needs to develop, although monitoring activities are not always rigorous. As a result, the centre's capacity for sustained improvement is good.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Strengthen the action plan and self-evaluation by setting specific and measurable targets and improving monitoring systems for every area.
- Effectively engage more users in the work of the centre at all levels including through the steering group and advisory board.

How good are outcomes for users?

2

Groups such as baby massage encourage parents to build positive relationships with their children. Healthy snacks are provided and children have the opportunity to grow fruit and vegetables in the centre's garden. Children from local early years settings also have the opportunity to access the garden which supports their development and learning. Children are provided with a more healthy diet at home as a result of courses such as the healthy eating course. There has been an increase in the number of parents breastfeeding their children and obesity levels have reduced as a result of the healthy eating programmes. Activities such as the buggy walk are popular with parents and provide an opportunity to get exercise and fresh air. Data indicate that users benefit from smoking-cessation support and many are helped to stop smoking.

Children are kept safe in their homes through work such as home safety visits. Parents and carers feel safe at the centre and enjoy their time. Information about safeguarding procedures is available to all users. Case studies demonstrate that effective multi-agency working is having a positive impact on children and families who may need additional support in promoting the families' overall welfare. The centre is proactive in responding to families at times of crisis and case studies show how parents receive effective support and guidance to improve the lives of their families. Effective use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) ensures that services are provided by the most appropriate agency. Centre staff are also aware of the wide range of partner organisations and there is clear signposting to other services. Staff will also support parents in making initial contact with these partner organisations.

Excellent work by the centre's teachers with local early years providers is raising achievement as demonstrated by the Early Years Foundation Stage profile scores. These have improved year on year and now are approaching national averages from a low start. Case studies show that parents who access the outreach service are much more confident and more able to manage their children and support their learning and development. Satisfaction rates are high and users report that they enjoy their time at the centre. Excellent transition planning and support mean that children are well prepared and supported when accessing early years provision or

school.

Parents report that as result of courses on effective parenting and behaviour management they are much better equipped to parent their children. Users who attend courses at the centre develop more confidence and most go on to undertake further training. Many become volunteers at the centre. As volunteers they receive an excellent package of support including access to external, accredited training courses. Some have been successful in obtaining paid employment.

The centre has satisfactory links with some local further adult education providers and links with Jobcentre Plus are improving, but there is no clear progression in developing skills or for entering employment for those who do not volunteer. Some have been successful in obtaining paid employment. The centre has satisfactory links with some local further adult education providers and links with Jobcentre Plus are improving.

The centre is committed to engaging parents in the work of the centre. Parents and carers contribute to the work of the centre through exit surveys and satisfaction surveys and, as a result of this feedback, some changes are made to services. The parents' forum meet regularly and feed into the steering group. Some parents contribute to decision making at the centre through the steering group and advisory board, although this is not well established. Staff representatives will often take forward parents' and carers' views to these meetings. The centre is looking at how it can involve more users in these groups. Children's views are sought and their wishes shape some of the activities at the centre. Their behaviour is good and centre staff have clear expectations of behaviour which are shared with parents.

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, and 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	1
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?

2

Information about activities is widely circulated within the community. The monthly

newsletter is also distributed to all families within the reach area, ensuring that they are kept informed about what is being offered at the centre. In addition, centre staff attend community events where they promote the centre's work. Centre staff work with community groups and volunteers who run some of the groups, ensuring that services are of good quality and meet the needs of the children and families attending. For example the 'Daddy Cool' group allows male carers to have the opportunity to enjoy time with their children.

The centre knows its users well and services are adapted to meet the changing needs of the community. A comprehensive range of procedures for assessing the needs of children and families has been developed. Multi-agency working and information sharing such as 'team around the child' meetings mean that families benefit from individual tailored support from a range of agencies. Outreach work is well planned and clear targets for this work are agreed between those involved. Case studies demonstrate the positive impact of this work in bringing about changes for families. The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) is effectively used for families who have been identified as having higher levels of need.

Activities are provided at the centre and community venues and feedback is that the activities are enjoyable. A mini-bus is available to take parents to venues if required. Parents and their children are treated with respect and all are seen as individuals. Staff have excellent knowledge of the range of services available within the community which ensures that parents and carers are signposted to the many services which exist. The centre has had success in engaging fathers and teenage parents. There are good links with the Nepalese community and it has been successful in recruiting two volunteers from this community. Events such as the Diwali celebration are supporting this development.

The centre is warm and welcoming. Parents feel able to access the centre and to ask for the support they need. Staff are aware of the hard-to-reach groups in the community and have been successful engaging them in the work of the centre. The centre staff use their knowledge of the community to ensure that services continue to meet their needs. Children make excellent progress from their starting points. By the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage their skills are above those of other children in the local authority area. The centre teachers are working with early years providers and commissioned services to ensure that the standard of care and learning is at least good. Parents who receive outreach work benefit from individually tailored packages of support. They are actively involved in target setting and in the reviewing of targets. Effective signposting ensures that parents continue to receive support appropriate to their individual needs.

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,	2

development and enjoyment for all users	
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

The centre's leadership team is committed to improving outcomes for users. There is an ethos of joint working and this, along with the commitment to improvement, is shared by the centre staff. One parent commented that the centre was 'brilliant' and offered 'good advice'.

Staff at all levels have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Supervision arrangements are clear and include clinical supervision where appropriate. Effective signposting and joint workers provide an integrated package of support to users across the local area. Services are offered at the centre and within the community, directly by centre staff, through partner agencies and through commissioned services. These resources meet users' needs well and improve outcomes for their families. The district working model ensures that services are not duplicated, resources are shared and this, along with good outcomes, ensures that the centre provides good value for money.

The governance arrangements for the centre are clear. Partner agencies are actively involved in the governance of the centre. However, representation from parents at all levels of governance is not as strong. Users' views are sought in a range of ways and these feed into shaping the centre's services. Staff are proactive in taking forward any parent issues to the appropriate forum. Evaluations are used to obtain feedback more formally from users. These are sometimes used to shape future services. However, there is no systematic method for feeding back to parents.

The centre has a good volunteer scheme. Volunteers have a clear recruitment process and are supported in their area of work. Ongoing training and support build their skills and knowledge. Some volunteers are encouraged to take a lead role in managing groups within the community alongside centre staff. Many are successful in obtaining paid employment or accessing further training.

Leaders understand the diversity of families within their reach area. There have been some notable successes for example in engaging pregnant teenagers, fathers and members of the Nepalese community. There has been a focus on cultural diversity, but there are some missed opportunities to reflect the wider community. For example, some information about the centre has been translated into other languages, but the centre is not proactive in responding to individual language needs. The use of culturally diverse resources is developing families' understanding of the wider community and differing needs, but some images and resources are stereotypical. The centre's focus on reducing the achievement gap between different

groups has been successful and the gap is reducing. The centre identifies that some children have disabilities and/or difficulties and an effective range of support is offered.

Services are evaluated through case studies, local knowledge, satisfaction surveys and data. The centre is developing the use of data and much is now centre specific. The centre is aware of areas where it needs to have more accurate data and is working to achieve this in order to further improve outcomes. Partner agencies contribute to the centre's self-evaluation. This document is used as a basis to set targets in the centre's action plan. It covers the main priorities for the centre and is a useful management tool to guide the centre's development. Progress reports against the action plan are completed quarterly and shared with the steering group and advisory board. Where specific targets are set, the centre is able to measure its success accurately. However, some targets are too broad to ensure the planned outcomes are achieved.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. Robust recruitment procedures ensure the suitability of staff and volunteers who work with the children. The centre provides a safe environment for users and risk assessments are in place. Reporting procedures of accidents and incidents to the advisory board ensure that the safety of users is monitored. Effective joint-working arrangements and clear communication are having a positive effect on supporting families who need additional support or may be subject to child protection plans.

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	2
The extent to which equality is promoted and diversity celebrated, illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	2
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	3

community to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	
---	--

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

The Umbrella Nursery, which provides the day care provision, has been subject to its own inspection. The report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk

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 the Buckland and Whitfield Children's Centre on 10 and 11 August 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

The centre provides a warm, welcoming and stimulating environment for families. Many of you told us that you enjoy attending the centre and that it has made a difference for you and your children. The achievement of children and users who attend the centre is outstanding. Children make extremely good progress from their starting points. Satisfaction rates are high and users report enjoyment at the centre. Those of you who have attended short courses have also attended other courses. Some of you have gone on to become volunteers at the centre and have progressed further into paid employment.

Good links with partner agencies and organisations in the community mean that those of you who need additional support benefit from an individually tailored package. The outreach service provides targeted work to those of you who need this level of support. Those of you who may be worried about visiting the centre are supported to do so and encouraged to build links with other users.

The centre provides you with a safe and secure environment. Staff and volunteers complete the necessary checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with you and your families. You are given information about safeguarding and fire evacuation procedures at the centre.

Feedback about the activities is obtained from you by the centre in a number of ways and feeds into the work of the centre. We have asked the centre to look at how it encourages you to become more involved in making decisions about the centre. This includes how your views and ideas contribute to the steering group and advisory board.

The centre leaders and staff have a good understanding of the community in which you live and a good understanding of the issues that you face. Staff are committed to improving outcomes for you and your families. The centre's action plan is used to make sure that the centre continues to make improvements. We have asked the leaders to strengthen the action plan to make it more effective, including using more data to set targets to help them to continue to improve the services they offer. We have also asked them to more closely monitor and evaluate their work to ensure that services continue to have an impact on improving outcomes.

Some of you have become volunteers at the centre and you receive good support, including good access to training and education.

You tell us that you are made to feel welcome at the centre and are given lots of support irrespective of your background or concerns. Celebrations of festivals and events encourage understanding of different areas of the community. The centre's use of persona dolls has supported you and your children to understand about some of the diversity within your community. The centre also provides a range of books and images that promotes equality and diversity.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to meet and to talk to us. We appreciate you taking the time to give us your views and thoughts about the centre. We wish you and your families every success for the future.

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