

Inspection report for Corsham Children's Centre

Local authority	Wiltshire
Inspection number	383491
Inspection dates	22–23 September 2011
Reporting inspector	Alex Baxter

Centre leader	Liz James
Date of previous inspection	The is the centre's first inspection
Centre address	Corsham Regis Primary School, Kings Avenue, Corsham, Wilts SN130EG
Telephone number	01249 716 254
Fax number	N/A
Email address	corshamchildrenscentre@barnardos.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	Corsham Regis Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	ABC Nursery

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.



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/100080.

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

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

No.100080

© 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.

An inspection of the co-located/partner primary school 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 one additional inspector and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with representatives of the centre's governing body, the local authority and the senior management and leadership teams. Employees of partnership agencies linking with and visiting the centre were consulted. Inspectors also spoke with centre staff and families using the centre.

They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Corsham Children's Centre was established as a Phase 2 local authority run Sure Start children's centre in April 2008.

This purpose-built centre is located within the grounds and facilities of Corsham Regis Primary School. Some of the children's centre's premises are shared with an adjacent privately run nursery. The centre's accommodation comprises two small office areas, a staff room and toilet facilities. Children and family rooms include sensory and activity rooms and a welcoming reception area. In addition, the centre has two small, secure outdoor areas and, on occasion, has use of some of the facilities within the adjacent Nursery. The centre also utilises several community venues within its reach area to deliver children's centre services. Through its various partnerships, Corsham delivers the full core offer, which includes early intervention support for families in greatest need and services such as health, maternity, early years education and family support, some on an outreach basis.

The centre currently serves communities in the market town of Corsham and surrounding villages. Some families are very affluent, and others considerably disadvantaged. Currently 13% of the children under five are members of families who depend on workless benefits. Families of White British heritage predominate, but there are an increasing number of families from White European backgrounds and other minority groups. The Ministry of Defence is a major employer that brings people into the area and there is a significant armed service presence. The reach area also includes a well-established Travellers' site. Children's skill levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are generally below those expected for their age.

The centre has been managed by Barnardos since April 2011, with continuing monitoring and support from the local authority. Governance arrangements also include an advisory board made up of representatives of the community and partner groups. At the time of the inspection the previous manager of the centre was recommencing her duties on a part-time induction basis following maternity leave. In addition there have been considerable changes in other areas of staffing at the centre and across local partner groups over the last 12 months.

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 families

3

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

3

Main findings

Corsham Children's Centre is a welcoming place which provides a satisfactory and improving quality of provision. Parents who avail themselves of the centre's support are very appreciative of the help they receive from caring staff and develop self-confidence and enjoyment from the friendships made. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make sound progress in their learning and development.

The centre's advisory board, with the support of local authority and Barnardo's partners, has sustained satisfactory provision during a difficult period of staff change. The centre's satisfactory self-evaluation includes the views of staff and users. However, the lack of a formal parents' and carers' group limits their involvement in shaping the centre's services.

Parents have confidence in the work and support given by staff and feel safe in the

centre. Children are well supervised and appropriate procedures safeguard their welfare. The centre also has an inclusive ethos, which provides an equal welcome to children and families from a wide range of backgrounds.

Good joint working with the local authority's early years inclusion adviser and with staff of the specialist Springboard Centre means that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported effectively. However, while there is improved liaison with childminders and the Westlea Housing Association, links with social service teams are underdeveloped, which, at times, makes it more difficult than it needed to organise outreach support.

The centre's work with other providers is satisfactory and improving. There has been steady progress in increasing the number of vulnerable families accessing services through, for example, effective referrals, particularly from health workers, the visiting midwife and link nursery. As a result, for example, more fathers and young mothers are supported. Discussions with parents revealed how outreach workers, in particular, have created opportunities for some parents to volunteer and move into employment. Partner working with Jobcentre Plus is inconsistent in quality, sometimes limiting the way parents can be prepared for further training or employment.

The centre has used data with some success to target specific groups; for example, reaching more single and young parents and promoting breastfeeding. However, given the staff changes, managers admit that they are not yet using data to fully engage more with some vulnerable groups in the community and evaluate their work.

Overall, improvement has been satisfactory rather than good because it has been constrained by staff changes. The number of families accessing support is satisfactory. Even so, the improving partnerships, positive outcomes achieved by families using the centre and the steady increase in vulnerable families supported show a satisfactory capacity for sustained improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Make more effective use of data to target vulnerable groups and to evaluate how effectively the centre's activities are meeting their needs.
- Formalise and improve the involvement of parents and carers in the governance of the centre by establishing a specific parents' and carers' group, such as a parent and carer development board or parents' and carers' forum.
- Strengthen partnerships with social care staff to support vulnerable families and with Jobcentre Plus to provide additional training and guidance for parents in

preparing for employment.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre's role in the life of the community is satisfactory and outcomes are improving. The centre's records show that families already accessing its services are well supported, numbers attending are steadily increasing and outcomes are improving in quality. Target groups have been defined and the reach to these groups is satisfactory and improving. These include, for example, increased numbers of fathers accessing services and strengthening support of transient service families and travellers. Data available to the centre on target groups are at least satisfactory in quality but the centre is only just beginning to use the data effectively to be sure that all needy families in the area are identified.

Observations show that children and their parents enjoy the learning that takes place in the centre. Assessment records, including 'learning journeys' indicate that those children attending sessions are generally making satisfactory progress, including in their communication and language skills. High levels of enjoyment and close individual support for children promote good progress in their personal and emotional development. Children attending the sessions at the centre and at other locations clearly enjoy practical activity.

Young mothers speak appreciatively of the understanding that they receive following new child births. They develop trusting relationships with outreach and health workers and talk openly during the supportive baby clinic and 'Under 1s' play and parenting sessions held at the centre. These demonstrate parents' increased self-esteem and good understanding of breast feeding and related issues and steadily improving confidence and health outcomes for young children. As one parent noted, 'I get good advice and know my child benefits from active play here and I like meeting my new friends.' Relationships between the users, children and staff at the centre are good and children behave well in the centre.

Parents' and carers' willingly express their ideas and, as a result of feedback from them the centre staff have increased the amount of play equipment available in the centre's outdoor areas and commissioned additional 'Gym Babes' and 'Tumble Tots' sessions. These sessions promote continuing healthy lifestyles for children beyond the 'Under 1's' group. While parents also complete informative evaluations of the services they attend, which are considered carefully by staff, their role in the more formal decision-making and governance of the centre is less developed.

Healthy eating is given clear emphasis and the young parents' group enjoys the healthy lunch provided by the centre. Free fruit is also available and parents report that they then buy more fruit at home once they know that their children will eat it. While families engaging with the centre make positive steps in adopting healthy lifestyles, data show that more could be done to reduce childhood obesity in the area.

Satisfactory safeguarding procedures and consistent care from staff help children and their parents feel safe as they access the full range of children’s centre support. The processes for the Common Assessment Framework are securely established. Despite links with the social care team that are variable in quality, the centre’s effective links with health and other outreach professionals, nursery staff and increasingly childminders enable staff to make successful referrals at an early stage. There are improving outcomes for children supported by child protection plans, for looked after children and for some children considered at risk in homes where there has been domestic violence.

Children’s centre evaluations and discussions with parents show that families are helped to make satisfactory progress in developing their economic well-being. Some parents talk appreciatively about the help they have received in accessing services, benefits and training and voluntary employment from outreach workers. Observations of home visiting showed that parents are also helped to understand first aid and home safety. Although unemployment in the wider, mostly rural areas served by the centre is relatively low, inconsistency in working with Jobcentre Plus staff is limiting efforts to tackle increasing unemployment in the area immediately served by the centre.

These are the grades for the outcomes for families

The extent to which children, including those from target 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 children and parents, including those from target groups, 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 parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	3
The extent to which children are developing skills for the future and parents, including those from target groups, are developing economic stability and independence including access to training and employment	3

How good is the provision?

3

The range of services and activities provided for those who attend the centre and use its outreach services are satisfactory and meet the needs of families. Activities provided at the centre, such as 'Messy Monsters' play and crafts, antenatal clinic and outdoor and free play sessions, develop good social links and promote the emotional well-being of families. At the centre children have ample opportunities to enjoy their learning through purposeful play activities, indoors and outdoors. Children gleefully gurgle with excitement in the role play areas and particularly favour the beneficial experience of the sensory room. The variety of activities located at other venues, such as the Young Parents' Group at St Aldhelm's Church and the Dads' and Kids' Club at Corsham Library also represent enjoyable and beneficial services developing parenting skills and promoting children's personal development.

All the children, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, and their parents and carers who use the centre benefit from a safe and well-resourced learning environment. However, the lack of space is a limiting factor, restricting the number of families and service providers that can access the centre at any given time.

Identifying next steps through assessment is developing well with childminders to improve the quality of children's learning experiences, both indoors and outside.

The guidance and support given to individual families and those attending the small group activities, especially for young and/or teenage mothers, is of satisfactory quality. Positive relationships and consistent pastoral care lie at the heart of all that the centre does. Increasing numbers of referrals of families in need show the value placed by partners on the secure quality of care provided by the staff of the centre. Staff are well supported by the local authority advisory teacher and development officer who have completed accurate annual conversation assessments and action plans. These identify clear next steps to improve provision and quicken progress, but the introduction of 'Every Child a Talker' strategy is relatively new and has not yet impacted fully in raising children's skills.

Health and outreach staff work closely with identified parents to make sure that the services or support that are offered are matched well to their needs. This may include, especially for some families, one-to-one support in tackling rural isolation, domestic violence and regularly covers home safety and guidance in parenting.

These are the grades for the quality of provision.

The extent to which the range of services, activities and opportunities meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	3
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	3
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	3

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

Despite significant change and recent instability in staffing, managers share a determination to adapt services so that they are more responsive to the needs of the most vulnerable. Even though this process is not yet complete, improvements show that the use of resources is at least satisfactory and sometimes better, and that satisfactory value for money has been secured. For example, over the past year improving partnerships with other services, such as childminders and the Westlea Housing Association, have brought a steady improvement in the way the centre engages with families in need.

The centre's well-organised advisory board, support from the local authority and increasing guidance from Barnardo's, the new management board, are managing improvement well and ensure satisfactory governance. Those involved in governance are well aware of the need to use data more effectively to improve identification and contact with vulnerable families, involve parents and carers more formally in the work of the centre and the need to tackle weaker partnerships such as those with Jobcentre Plus. As a result, self-evaluation has improved and the new leaders now have clear, challenging plans to tackle the issues.

The staff's close links with the local authority inclusion adviser also ensure that children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are fully included and the achievement gap is narrowing. The centre has an inclusive, caring ethos. Additional staff training and resources, including 'Persona Dolls' that are shared with the adjacent nursery, have raised awareness of equality and diversity. This is enabling the centre to suitably meet the needs of a steadily increasing number of families from minority ethnic backgrounds, including transient service families and Travellers.

Safeguarding policies and procedures are secure. All staff have been trained in child protection and are fully aware of how to identify and take appropriate action to ensure children's safety. Appropriate Criminal Record Bureau and recruitment checks are fully completed and kept up to date. Case studies show that the children and families at risk who have been identified are suitably supported with multi-agency cooperation aiding early intervention and promoting emotional health and well-being and dealing with domestic violence. There are effective fire drills and other reviews, including appropriate risk assessments in place for the different areas of the centre, although not all are suitably dated and signed to aid future checks.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	3

The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	3
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area 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

This inspection took account of the children's skills on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage obtained from the inspection findings of the Section 5 inspection of Corsham Regis Primary School, which took place on 21–22 September 2011 and from current data of the children now attending the school. This inspection also took account of the centre's partnership arrangements with the Corsham Regis Primary School and the adjacent privately run ABC Nursery.

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 Corsham Children's Centre on 22–23 September 2011. We judged the centre to be satisfactory overall. It is an improving centre as new and returning staff use their expertise to ensure that the parents and children who access their support make sound progress. We found that the staff of the centre are steadily improving the links with other service providers and share a clear determination to adapt its services to meet the needs of the families that need most support.

The leadership and management and staffing of the centre have experienced much change over the past year, but with effective support from the local authority and the Barnardo's service manager the centre is now emerging positively. Through close teamwork, and improving liaison with other providers such as childminders, the centre has steadily identified and increased the number of vulnerable families now accessing its services. Key strengths are the wide range of drop-in opportunities for support and contact provided for parents and children at venues across the area

served by the centre and by the determination of staff to support vulnerable families through home visiting. Our observations of activities at the centre, such as the baby clinic, 'Under 1s' play and children using the play room and outdoor play areas and our evaluations of outreach and home visiting activity, for example at Rudloe, show that children and their parents make satisfactory and sometimes better progress. They enjoy the centre's various activities and develop good social skills, in particular they make good gains in developing self-confidence and value the close guidance from health and outreach staff.

On safety, you tell us and we agree that staff implement secure procedures to keep you and your children safe when you visit the centre and its outreach locations. We also agree with you that the staff promote warm relationships, make you feel welcome and treat all of you with respect.

However, the centre does face some important challenges. An important one is to engage more vulnerable families that need help. Managers recognise this and are dealing with the issue.

The second challenge is to involve parents and carers more in helping to steer the centre in the right direction. Parents and carers complete evaluations of the activities that they attend and enjoy frequent and supportive informal discussions with staff and members of the advisory board. These often lead to improved services and resources, for example, additional activities for fathers and extra outdoor play equipment at the centre. Even so, the absence of a formally constructed parents' and carers' group means that full use is not made of parents' and carers' views in helping the centre to improve services and support more vulnerable families.

Thirdly, we have asked managers to work more closely with social care staff to provide an even better service to families at time of crisis and with Jobcentre Plus to provide help for parents in preparing for employment.

We would like to thank you for allowing us to join with you during some of your sessions and for sparing the time to give us your thoughts on the centre and its activities.

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