

Inspection report for Half Crown Wood Children's Centre

Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	383503
Inspection dates	5–6 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Keith Brown

Centre leader	Janet Bonney
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Centre address	Princess Way Stourport-on-Severn Worcestershire DY13 0EL
Telephone number	01299 877920
Fax number	N/A
Email address	janet.bonney@barnardos.org.uk

Linked school if applicable	St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	N/A

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 an early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings and interviews with the children's centre manager and staff, the nursery teacher at St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School, the proprietor of In B Tweenies day centre, the chairman of the advisory board, a Barnardo's senior manager, representatives of the local authority, parents and carers, a community health visitor, a community midwife, a JobCentre Plus adviser and a local regeneration project leader.

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

Information about the centre

The centre was established as a phase two Children's Centre in January 2009. In June 2010 it moved to a self-contained wing in the same building as St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School and is on the same site as the In B Tweenies day centre. The reach area of Half Crown Wood Children's Centre, approximately five square miles, covers the majority of Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire. The local authority has commissioned Barnardo's to have strategic management of the centre. Stourport-on-Severn is divided geographically by the River Severn and a satellite centre on the other side of the town from the children's centre is due for completion in January 2012.

The centre is located within a 70% most disadvantaged area but there are pockets of greater disadvantage in the reach area, with one area in the top 20% and three in the top 30% nationally. The vast majority of families are of White British heritage. However there is a well established Gypsy Roma Traveller community, including two permanent sites, and a number of families of Gypsy Roma Traveller heritage who are

now living in houses in the town. The centre provides services for children under five years of age and their families. Crèche facilities are provided to support users' access to services, where needed. The centre does not provide early years childcare, but offers advice and guidance to parents and carers on the day-care and childminding facilities available within the local community. There are 893 children under five years of age in the centre's reach area. There is a high number of workless families dependant on state benefits. The rate of unemployment and the proportion of teenage mothers are above average in the most disadvantaged superoutput areas.

The skills, knowledge and abilities of many children on entry to early years' provision are below those expected for their age.

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

2

Capacity for sustained improvement

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

2

Main findings

Half Crown Wood is a good children's centre, which families say they find 'invaluable'. The centre knows its users well and has a good understanding of the reach area and the issues which its families face.

Effective leadership and management by the centre manager and the advisory board has secured significant improvements in a relatively short period of time. These include an emphasis on providing a wide range of effective services, ensuring that the centre is an attractive and safe place for users, improving outcomes for users, and establishing a good parents forum. The centre manager and staff demonstrate a passion and determination to improve the life chances of families in the local community.

The centre is located in a disadvantaged area in the south of the town. The number of families who are accessing and consistently using the centre's facilities is good overall. However the reach area is geographically divided by the River Severn, and, with only one bridge crossing, it has been difficult for some families in the central and northern part of the town to access the centre's services. The centre has well focused plans to address this issue, particularly using the satellite centre which will open shortly on the opposite side of town to the existing children's centre.

The centre has developed good partnerships with a range of other agencies which ensure effective working practices, such as the sharing of information and signposting to each other's services. Effective management of contracts and rigorous delivery by partner agencies have led to services being appropriately refocused to continue to meet the needs of users. Procedures for safeguarding are robust and comprehensive. Relationships with parents and carers are good. Users speak positively about what the centre provides and say that all staff are welcoming and helpful. A typical comment from users is 'I've made friends and learned new skills. I'm so glad I came through the door.'

Good multi-agency working provides clear and carefully targeted support and guidance for families, with the result that their well-being is improved. Assessments of need are thorough, and concerns are followed through diligently by an appropriate range of professionals. Regular meetings about vulnerable children ensure that support brings about improved levels of care within their families. Action taken is carefully tailored to meet the needs of users, especially those who are in challenging circumstances or in a period of crisis. The centre is inclusive and fully celebrates diversity. Case-study evidence is robust and shows considerable impact for the most vulnerable families in the community.

Outcomes for children and families are consistently good. Many parents' and carers' aspirations for themselves and their children are high. Babies and children enjoy the comprehensive range of high-quality learning activities, well-planned around the Early Years Foundation Stage. They become independent, inquisitive learners as their parents and carers develop the confidence to let them explore the well resourced environment. These experiences, together with well-managed transition arrangements, mean that children are ready to learn when they start school and progress quickly. Tracking of children who have attended the centre's services shows that their achievements are higher when assessed at five years of age than those who have not.

Adults also enjoy their learning. They say that their self-confidence and parenting skills have improved. They use their learning to inspire activities at home and adopt healthier lifestyles for their families. The centre encourages adults to take part in a range of activities and values their feedback, making changes and introducing new ideas in response to their views. These are displayed on a 'You Said, We Did' board in the centre. However the centre is aware of the need to improve the take up and success rate of the accredited adult learning courses it has facilitated and has drawn up plans to address these issues.

The centre manager and advisory board have created an extremely clear plan for development following good self-evaluation. An effective relationship exists between the local authority and Barnardo's. Together they provide good support and challenge to the centre manager and the children's centre's partners.

The centre's recent progress and the energy with which areas for improvement are

currently being tackled are indicative of its good capacity to sustain improvements.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Develop the children's centre's provision for all parts of its reach area, including the effective utilisation of the new satellite centre.
- Improve access to and completion of accredited adult learning programmes.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The centre offers a broad range of programmes to families to help improve their physical and emotional health. Analysis of data indicates that the number of children under five who are obese is falling and that the centre is starting to have an impact on increasing the number of new mothers starting breastfeeding and continuing breastfeeding after six weeks. Users' understanding of how to promote their own good health is developing well through the implementation of healthy lifestyle programmes at the stay and play sessions. Feedback from users attending the popular 'Wibbly Wobblers' group indicates that they understood more about their child's physical development and would encourage more physical activity at home. The centre recently tendered successfully for a contract to deliver a smoking cessation course, particularly for the key target group of teenage mothers.

Parents and carers report that they are confident that their children are safe while attending the centre because of staff's attentiveness and the security systems in place. All staff have a thorough knowledge of safeguarding practice and policy. Good support is given to families who are subject to child protection plans, in order to safeguard vulnerable children, including looked after children. As a result of the centre's input, children and families make good progress in developing their understanding of safety in and around the home.

The proportion of children who attain expected levels for their age in their skills knowledge and understanding by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved progressively in recent years, but for many is still below local authority and national levels. The gap is steadily closing for the 20% who have the lowest scores. Assessments indicate that children are making pleasing progress in most areas of learning and developing a good range of skills to prepare them for primary school education. The centre is rightly focusing on communication, language and literacy in its 'Baby Talk' and 'Wordygigs' stay and play sessions. The centre is aware that the presentation of its outdoor area could be improved during freeflow activities.

The centre's wide-ranging support for parents and carers is helping those who access the centre to learn and develop new skills and to improve their prospects for future

employment. The centre commissions some accredited courses to help parents and carers to increase their qualifications and confidence. However, take-up so far has been low. The centre plans to commission further accredited programmes in the new year, focused on literacy and numeracy. Some parents commented on how advice from the centre has made a difference within the home, and others on how they have developed self-confidence as a result of courses and one-to-one support. Case studies show how individual families, including one of Gypsy, Romany Traveller heritage, have progressed well in their personal and social development, improved their parenting skills and strengthened their economic stability. The centre has been successful in ensuring that families are able to access the benefits to which they are entitled to improve their economic well-being. Staff are passionate about their work and have a real desire to make a difference within the local community. Achievement is highly valued and celebrated, which is helping to raise users' aspirations.

Behaviour in and around the centre is good. Relationships within the centre are respectful and adults feel the centre makes a very important contribution to the community. Consequently, users are confident to give their opinions to staff on the activities they attend and issues within the centre. The advisory board and parents forum successfully provide formal mechanisms for parents' and carers' involvement in strategic decision making and service planning.

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	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 children and parents, including those from target groups, enjoy and achieve educationally and in their personal and social development	2
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	2
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	2

How good is the provision?

2

The assessment of users' needs and the tracking of progress are good. Staff make effective use of the Common Assessment Framework. Interventions that are used and the progress of all vulnerable families are well documented and monitored. The centre has forged good links with family and children's services. Its outreach work and close partnership working with learning and employment agencies and health services has resulted in effective support for all of the most vulnerable groups, such as lone parents, teenage parents, families in crisis and those experiencing domestic

violence. Consequently, the centre is improving the well-being, life chances and personal development of parents, carers and children well.

The staff team is very clear about and sensitive to the particular needs of the community and has been successful in encouraging families into the centre. Staff are proactive in trying to engage families through door to door surveys, newsletters, promotion at local supermarkets, school open days and clinics. Consequently, they are reaching all groups to varying extents and engaging with the majority of families within the centre's reach area. There are well developed plans to improve user engagement still further, by delivering services from the new satellite centre on the other side of town from the existing centre.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and promote children's learning and development well during sessions. They also effectively support parents' and carers' understanding of the quality and range of age-appropriate activities they can provide for their children. Parents and carers talked about their increasing confidence in playing with their children, developing their speech and managing their behaviour.

Parents and carers receive good advice and support to enable them to access services, such as childcare provision, housing benefits and health services. Good partnership working with JobCentre Plus, schools and colleges has resulted in parents and carers successfully moving into learning, training and employment. Parents and carers who became volunteers and were supported through training are now employed in nurseries in the reach area. There is an increase in the take-up of college courses by young parents and carers. Consequently, parents' and carers' economic stability and independence have improved as a result of the opportunities the centre has provided.

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	2
The extent to which the centre promotes purposeful learning, development and enjoyment for all families, including those in target groups	2
The quality of care, guidance and support offered to families, including those in target groups	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Governance arrangements are clear and effective. The local authority and Barnardo's have a good strategic overview of the centre's work. Leaders and managers at all levels are very clear about the centre's priorities through their perceptive analysis of its current strengths and areas for development. Since moving to its new premises in June 2010, there have been significant improvements in the work of the centre. Most notably, in the engagement with families and the community, the range of activities

provided and the challenge to staff on the quality, impact and real cost of activities. Value for money is good.

The knowledge, drive and determination of senior leaders and the support and commitment of staff is bringing about significant change, enhancing provision and improving the life chances for users. The vision and sense of purpose of the centre is shared by its partners. One partner said, 'It's a real positive working relationship we have with Half Crown Wood'. As a result, teamwork is effective and staff are forward thinking and reflective.

Evaluation of services is good and runs throughout all the provision. A range of methods are adopted, which include activity evaluation forms, surveys, and questionnaires. The views of children, parents and partners are gathered and used to shape services. The centre manager has been creative in how she organises the local advisory group and parents forum. Staff professional development is thorough and up to date.

Inclusion of all children and families is central to the centre's work. This is evidenced by the growth in the number of families who use the centre services consistently. There is a clear commitment to equality of opportunity. For example, staff have delivered services at the weekends and during the evenings to ensure that working parents have the same access.

Safeguarding arrangements are good. The 'team around the family' approach ensures that a wide range of professionals work together well to safeguard and protect children and families. Effective quality assurance systems, through case file audits and supervision, ensure that children, including those with disabilities, are well protected and families are receiving appropriate support. Parents are well informed of the centre's policy on protecting children and sharing information with other relevant agencies. Safe-recruitment practices are robust.

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 effectiveness of evaluation and its use in setting ambitious targets which secure improvement in outcomes	2
The extent to which resources are used and managed efficiently and effectively to meet the needs of families, including those in target groups	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 partnerships with other agencies ensure the integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	2
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	2

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

Inspectors took account of the report for St Bartholomew's CofE VC Primary School which was inspected in May 2009. The effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage was judged to be satisfactory.

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 Half Crown Wood Children's Centre on 5–6 October 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

To help us make our judgements, we observed activities, looked at documentation and spoke with a large number of service providers, professionals and parents and carers. Thank you very much indeed to all of you who helped us to understand the quality of services provided by staff.

The centre manager and her team place great importance on you and your families and are always prepared to listen carefully to you. They are passionate about creating a welcoming environment where you feel at home and are able to talk freely about things that matter to you or are causing you concern. As a result, you value the centre, which means you have no hesitation in using the services regularly. You told us that you think that the centre is a safe place for parents, carers and their children. Inspectors agree with this view and think that staff work well to ensure the health and safety of everyone who uses the centre.

The centre offers a good range of services and activities for all families in the area, which are led by dedicated and skilled professionals. Centre staff are good at guiding you and referring you and your children to other activities and services they think you would benefit from and enjoy. You told us that coming to the centre had increased your confidence and self-esteem. This is because centre staff and professionals from different agencies work closely with you and with each other to find out exactly what help and support you and your families need and make sure this is provided. A strength of the centre is the care, guidance and support the centre provides for you, often in your own home.

You told us that it was difficult for some families to get to the centre because the River Severn splits the town in two and there is only one bridge to cross over to the centre. We have asked the centre to improve access to services for families who live on the opposite side of the river. The new satellite centre which will open shortly should help the centre to do this.

We have also asked the centre to help more of you to take up accredited adult learning courses and to help you to finish the courses you have started if you have difficulties.

We would like to thank everyone who came to speak with us. It was a privilege to be able to talk with you. Your honest and open discussions with us helped us immensely during the inspection. We are very grateful for your help and we wish each of you every success for the future.

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