

Inspection report for Blagdon Nursery School and Children's Centre

Local authority	Reading
Inspection number	383480
Inspection dates	6–7 October 2011
Reporting inspector	Barbara Atcheson

Centre leader	Sarah Mitchell
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected.
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Linked school if applicable	Blagdon Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Willows Day 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.

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361

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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.

An inspection of the maintained nursery and day-care nursery 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with senior managers, health and education professionals, representatives of the local authority, outreach workers and parents and carers. They observed the centre's work and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Blagdon Nursery and Children's Centre is situated in Church Ward and part of Whitley Ward in Reading. It is a phase one centre and was designated in April 2006. The centre provides the full core offer through a range of integrated services that include health, family support, accredited adult training courses (on and off site) and childcare provision including a breakfast club. It is located in close proximity to the Sure Start Whitley Children's Centre. The two work in partnership when planning services to ensure that there is diversity of choice for the families. This includes sharing the services of a health-led family visiting team. On the site there is a family centre where the activities are coordinated. There is also a 24-place day-care nursery and an 80-place nursery school. These were subject to separate inspections carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre. The headteacher is overall manager of the centre and there is a deputy headteacher, a manager of the day-care nursery and a senior family development worker who manages the day-to-day running of the family centre. The centre is managed by the governing body. Three governors who sit on the advisory board are parents or carers.

The area covers seven local super output areas, four of these are in the 30% most deprived and the other three are in the 50% most deprived areas. Within the reach area there are 327 families with 650 children aged between 0 and 4 years. Over a

third of families consist of a lone parent and one third of the children are in households dependent on workless benefits. The percentage of families who benefit from childcare benefits and tax credits is low because the majority of families either rely on their extended family for childcare or they are not working. The population is fairly stable and is predominantly of White British heritage. The proportion of families from minority ethnic groups, particularly Black African, is increasing. However, many Black Africans are either students or in work. Children enter Blagdon Nursery School with a range of skills and knowledge that is well below that expected for their age, especially in language and communication.

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

Blagdon Nursery and Children's Centre provides a good service and level of support for children and their families. Recent surveys show that all families appreciate the excellent care, guidance and highly personalised support they receive in the centre's inclusive environment and the centre has earned the reputation for being, 'A good place to come'. Staffing is very stable and many come from the locality. As a result, the centre knows its families well. It has contact with 89% of families in the area and with 84% of families with children under five who are in most need. However, a minority attend the Sure Start Whitley Children's Centre as it is nearer to where they live.

The headteacher's clear vision and passion for improvement is shared by staff, senior leaders, governors and members of the advisory board. They have an accurate understanding of the centre's strengths, areas for improvement and high aspirations to improve services further. The centre has rigorous systems and procedures to monitor and evaluate its work. However, the strategic analysis and use of data for the wider community are not as well developed as they should be in planning and increasing future services. Safeguarding is paramount; procedures are outstanding and permeate through the centre. Parents, carers and children are given the skills, knowledge and understanding to keep themselves and their families safe and, as a result, they feel very secure and confident.

Fathers and grandfathers are included in, and attend, activities but say that they would now like to have a group that is specific to their needs. Families know that the centre will always take any concern seriously and involve them in resolving the issue. Parents and carers are well represented on the advisory board and three are also governors. Senior leaders have worked hard to ensure that these parents and carers have been empowered to play an active role in shaping the work of the centre. The centre works well with key partners to deliver good-quality, cohesive services, which lead to a positive impact on outcomes for users. It makes sure that those who are in most need of intervention and support are given the advice and guidance that enable them to take charge of their own lives and make life-enhancing decisions. All of this shows that the centre has good capacity to sustain improvement.

Children benefit from the seamless transition, facilitated by the transition worker, to the on-site day-care nursery and nursery school. Baby and parent sessions ensure that children are well prepared for their next step in their education and enter the nursery with higher levels of skills, knowledge and understanding than those who have not had this advantage. Outreach work has been considerably enhanced by the funding of a family visiting team, shared with the neighbouring children's centre. This has enabled the centre to initiate more activities focused on health. For example, by supporting teenage parents to engage with the children's centre and raising breastfeeding awareness, breastfeeding figures have increased by 3% this year.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Analyse and evaluate local data more rigorously and use it to plan next steps to broaden the centre's work within the reach.
- Extend the centre's provision to provide more purposeful opportunities for fathers to meet as a group.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

The effective partnership with health services has had a positive impact on the outcomes of all target groups. Seventy per cent of babies are being breastfed at six to eight weeks in the area against only 60% in Reading as a whole. Work done on smoking cessation has meant the area has the highest percentage (70%) of ex-smokers in any Reading ward. The 'Summer Club', which has a high take-up rate, especially by those in most need, modelled healthy eating at lunchtime well and gave out vegetable vouchers. The positive impact of initiatives like this is reflected in data which show that only a small minority of children are obese in Reception classes; the large majority of children aged four to five years of age have a healthy weight and the gap is narrowing between the lowest 20% and the rest.

The high priority placed on safeguarding and keeping safe is reflected in the extremely safe way that all children conduct themselves and access resources safely.

First-aid courses have helped all parents and carers who attended, including those from target groups such as lone parents, teenage parents and those in most need of support, to gain an excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and their families safe. A keen focus on improving parenting skills and reducing domestic violence, together with staff who are skilled in early identification and a strong network of support around those in most need, means that no child is currently under the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

Children enter the centre with a range of skills and knowledge that is well below that expected for their age, especially in language and communication. Over the last three years, levels on exit have risen and the gap has narrowed between the lowest 20% and the rest. Seventy-seven per cent of the children who went to one of the feeder primary schools in 2010 achieved a minimum of 78 points across the six areas of the Early Years Foundation Stage, compared with 59% in Reading. This is because the centre provides a rich learning environment and staff provide good role models, enabling parents and carers to help their children at home.

Accredited parenting courses are extremely popular. They raise self-esteem and give parents and carers confidence to take advantage of further education courses signposted by the centre. For example, one teenage parent, not in education or employment, has gone on to gain her National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Levels 1, 2 and 3. Thirty-seven per cent of those who have completed accredited courses are in target groups such as fathers, lone parents, teenage parents, workless and minority ethnic parents and carers.

Children behave exceptionally well. Parents, carers and children have good relationships. There is a great amount of respect for achievement within the centre. Parents and carers from all groups gain in self-confidence and are empowered to take responsibility. The 'Under 21' group drew up their own code of acceptable behaviour and renamed their group to promote it to a wider audience. Parents and carers on the advisory group have been trained for the role and play an important part in decision making. They have also developed enterprising behaviour, raising money through a 'Buggy Toddle' to help improve the play area outside. Parents and carers from the advisory group also sit on the governing body, providing a valuable insight and link in communicating views, knowledge and information.

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	1
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	1

positive relationships and parents, including those from target groups, contribute to decision-making and governance of the centre	
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 centre provides highly effective, personalised support for all families including those who have most need. Families know that the centre has always been somewhere to turn to in times of crisis and to help them to turn their lives around. The centre knows its families extremely well and uses this knowledge effectively to shape its provision so that outcomes for all groups are at least good. Careful assessment of families, especially those in most need, on a one-to-one basis ensures high-quality, tailor-made support and accurate signposting to the most appropriate agencies.

Provision to help children learn is good. The centre is a rich learning environment. Children enjoy engaging in interesting activities such as making faces with healthy food in the 'Play and Learn' sessions. Well-trained staff ensure that parents and carers learn alongside their children. Parenting skills in 'Share Plus' help parents and carers to adopt the ideas demonstrated in sessions. Courses such as 'Baby Talk' and 'Play And Learn' sessions are good at helping them to understand how to talk to their children. 'Story Time' helps parents and carers to enjoy the associated activities involved in sharing a book.

Parents and carers enjoy celebrating their achievements and staff are skilled at signposting them to adult learning courses leading to qualifications and employment. Staff ensure targets groups have opportunities to complete accredited courses and there are many success stories. For example, one minority ethnic parent who was previously not in education or employment achieved an NVQ Level 2 and now runs the 'Breakfast Club'. One sibling who was also not in education or employment and had very low self-esteem was given an apprenticeship within the Nursery. She said that, 'this turned my life around' and she went on to get her NVQ Levels 2 and 3. Two teenage parents recently became 'parents helping parents' volunteers through the local 'Innovations' project.

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	1

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

The headteacher's enthusiasm and focus on improvement are shared by staff, parents, carers and senior leaders. Leadership and management are shared well across all levels of the centre, with parents and carers playing an important role in its work through their membership on the advisory board and the governing body. Clear links between the governing body, the advisory board, headteacher and senior management provide a flow of information and ensure everyone is focused on improvement. Governance and accountability arrangements are well defined.

The centre is rigorous in monitoring and evaluating all that it does. Courses are evaluated at the end of each session and the annual parents questionnaire provides vital information for future plans. Children's achievements are effectively tracked and used for forward planning. The centre is committed to ensuring that all provision is of good quality. As a result, outcomes are at least good, with some that are outstanding. However, the centre has not yet made a detailed analysis of the data held at local authority level to plan how it can broaden its scope further, within the area. Families are united in their view that the centre has a good track record which meets their needs successfully and provides good value for money.

The centre is an inclusive and welcoming setting where relationships are positive and productive. It promotes inclusive practice for families and children with special educational needs and/or disabilities who particularly appreciate all that the 'Summer Club' has to offer. All staff understand, value and promote diversity in all its forms, and recognise the need to reach out to all groups especially if they are in the minority. Staff are effective in removing barriers like low self-esteem, gaps in knowledge and understanding, low levels of education and poor parenting skills.

Procedures, systems and record keeping for safeguarding are excellent and exemplify high-quality practice. Exceptionally well-trained staff not only ensure that the highest priority is given to safeguarding all children, but equip parents and carers with the skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure that this is carried on within the home. Checks on the suitability of adults to work with children are exemplary and child protection arrangements are entirely secure and updated regularly. Robust risk assessments are undertaken regularly and records are kept meticulously.

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	1
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

The inspection of the registered nursery and day-care nursery provision took place on 5–6 October 2011. The inspection team was aware of the provisional judgements for both at the time of the inspection of the children's centre.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Blagdon Nursery and Children's Centre on 6–7 October 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

During our visit, we looked at your centre's safeguarding documents, plans for development and numerous other documents. We spoke to a wide range of partner agencies working with the centre as well as staff, members of the advisory board and a representative from the local authority. We also visited all of the centre's activities taking place during the inspection and spoke to a substantial number of users of the centre. Thank you for your participation in the inspection. Those of you we spoke to were unanimous in your praise for all the centre staff have done for you and your children. Several spoke of the dedication of the staff who give '100%' and will go beyond what is expected of them to ensure help for specific problems is offered. Many of you told us directly how the centre had given you confidence in various aspects of your life and in some instances had been a 'lifesaver' and changed your lives considerably for the better. The support the centre has given in helping your children learn and develop has also been positive because you are more confident in helping your children read and write. The care, guidance and support provided for you are excellent. This is because the staff know everyone so well and therefore can target support and call upon the excellent, effective partners to give

specialist help. As a result, relationships are very positive and this helps towards the good and sometimes outstanding outcomes that are achieved by the centre. The centre listens to your views very well and you are well represented on the advisory board.

The centre is well run and managed and the advisory board works hard and is involved in shaping what goes on in the centre. The centre is rigorous in its monitoring and evaluation of all that it does and in making sure that improvements are made but has yet to broaden its scope in the area. In order to do this, we have asked the children's centre to make more effective use of the data that are now available to target the groups that are not yet accessing the good range of services on offer. In addition, we have asked the centre to plan more purposeful opportunities for fathers and grandfathers to meet as a group.

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