

Inspection report for Glastonbury Children's Centre

Local authority	Somerset County Council
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Date of previous inspection	n/a
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Playaways Neighbourhood 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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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 registered early years/childcare provision was carried out at the same time as the inspection of the centre under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006. The report of this inspection is available on our website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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

The inspectors held meetings with the centre's management team, representatives from the governing body of Brookside Community Primary School, the local authority, partnership agencies, members of staff and families using the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of documentation including key policies, the centre's self-evaluation documents, its development plans, evaluations of services and data about people who use the centre and the wider community.

Information about the centre

Glastonbury Children's Centre is a Phase One children's centre and was designated in May 2005. It offers a range of services which include health services, family play sessions, parenting programmes and outreach services. Services are provided at the children's centre as well as in venues in the community. The centre is situated in one of the 30% most disadvantaged areas in the country where many families are dependent on either workless benefits or low incomes.

The children's centre is run by the governing body of Brookside Community Primary School in Street on behalf of the local authority. It took over the governance of the centre on 1 April 2011 which included the appointment of a new senior leadership team. The centre operates in a two-centre cluster with Street Children's Centre. The population is mostly White British with smaller, but growing, percentages of other ethnic groups, some of whom speak English as an additional language.

Children's levels on entry to the Early Years Foundation Stage are low, particularly in communication, language and literacy development. Early years and childcare provision is provided by a local private provider, Playaways Neighbourhood Nursery, which is sited locally to the centre. This setting was inspected at the same time as this inspection.

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

2

Main findings

Glastonbury Children's Centre provides satisfactory but rapidly improving support to children and families in its reach area and, as a result, outcomes for families are at least satisfactory and increasingly better. The centre has undergone a period of significant change since the governance and leadership arrangements changed in April 2011. Centre leaders and managers are fully aware of the areas that require further development. Plans aimed at accelerating the quality of both provision and outcomes are in place, are already being implemented and are having a positive impact. For example, over a six-month period, the centre has been successful in engaging almost half of the families in the most deprived communities, which include its main target groups. As a result, the centre shows good capacity to improve further.

Since April, leaders and other staff have made significant inroads into building positive relationships with the community. They are now making better use of available data and other sources of intelligence about the reach area, and so have developed a good knowledge of the needs of the community. They are quickly developing services to promote outcomes for children and their families. Attendance at the centre and the use of centre-initiated services are increasing rapidly. Good partnerships with key agencies exist. Alongside centre staff, they work to common aims and are clear about the contribution they make towards improving the life chances of local families including the most vulnerable.

The safeguarding of children and vulnerable users is given good attention. Centre staff adopt an open approach with families. When users express concerns about

families they know, staff effectively support them to ensure children are protected. They guide users in how to report their concerns to the appropriate agency and ensure contact information for the local children's services team is visible throughout the centre. Through close working with social care partners, centre staff have successfully supported families to remain together. Children are kept safer in their homes as centre staff support parents to identify and minimise risks and provide free, easily accessible home safety equipment.

The engagement of parents is satisfactory and improving. Centre staff seek their views on the quality of the services they engage in and users report strong levels of satisfaction about the services they receive. Managers are working hard to improve families' representation and role in governance even further. There is an appropriate focus on improving the participation of minority ethnic groups in services.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Continue to develop the analysis of available data to support the strategic development of services, ensuring they are targeted at those most in need.
- Implement strategies aimed at increasing the number of families who engage with services with a particular focus on those from minority ethnic groups and those who are hard to reach.
- Develop the role that parents undertake in the governance of the centre in order that they are provided with better opportunities to influence the direction of service development.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Parents are developing a satisfactory understanding of how to promote a healthier lifestyle for their families. They are learning how to provide healthy meals on a budget in 'Stay and Play' sessions where, together with their children, they cook and eat a balanced lunch. Parents have responded to guidance on how to support their child to play outdoors as staff regularly provide activities within the centre's outdoor play area. More recently, staff have introduced opportunities for families to learn together about the outdoor environment through the introduction of 'forest school' activities. Mothers who choose to breastfeed their babies appreciate the good support provided at a breastfeeding weekly café and the introduction of breastfeeding peers. Health professionals report a positive picture in respect of the percentage of mothers who breastfeed in the reach area.

Parents confirm that the support they receive from staff has a positive impact on helping them to effectively manage their children's behaviour. Children are beginning to learn about developing positive relationships with both adults and children. They show growing levels of confidence in their environment and demonstrate that they

feel safe as they happily play in areas away from their parents. Safeguarding of children is effectively promoted and staff work well with those families subject to a child protection plan in order to improve outcomes.

Children and their parents have fun as they learn together, particularly when they take part in messy play activities. Some parents indicate that they are implementing the ideas they learn at the centre in the home environment. They are developing parenting skills and an increasing understanding of how their child develops. This is helped by the provision of suitable programmes such as a short course on the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Staff give appropriate emphasis to promoting children's language and communication skills as they plan and deliver suitable activities within the groups they provide; for example, within the 'Chatterbox' and 'Funky Monkeys' groups, staff focus on supporting parents to communicate positively with their children through singing and the use of signing. Parents are provided with tips on how to adopt an approach that will encourage their child's communication. However, attainment of children at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage across the reach area is variable. The centre's leadership team has undertaken analysis of the most recent data in order to identify where staff need to target their efforts in order improve this picture.

Families are beginning to improve their economic position as centre staff place a strong emphasis on helping them to develop the necessary skills to obtain work. For example, local jobs are regularly advertised within the centre and in groups run by the centre in the community. Family members are given useful support with completing applications and developing interview skills through the centre's 'Work Club' and with the help of the 'Next Steps advisor'.

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	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	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

Centre staff know the families who attend the centre well. They implement an assessment process in order to identify the needs of the families who receive targeted support. This results in a suitable action plan which identifies services to improve outcomes for the family. However, in relation to the use of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), managers have identified that this framework has been underutilised. Staff have recently undergone training to develop their confidence in the implementation of the CAF process. Managers have access to comprehensive data provided by the local authority. They use this satisfactorily to help identify their target groups and this gives them reasonable understanding of their reach area. Managers are beginning to analyse information available to them more rigorously in order that they have a clearer picture of how to best target their efforts to engage an even larger proportion of families in the reach area.

Together with the local learning and skills provider, the centre offers families some opportunities to access training, such as in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in literacy and numeracy. Having accessed this training, an individual learning plan is developed to help users to identify where they would like to take their learning next, for example by moving on to further education. Parents are also supported in developing a learning environment at home; for example, together with their children, they complete scrap books to record their experiences in the centre. These include tips on improving communication skills which they can take home for future reference.

Families are provided with satisfactory levels of care, guidance and support within the centre. Staff take a sensitive approach to providing relevant information about topics such as sexual health and domestic violence. Those who experience difficulties in their lives are able to obtain the support of a free counselling service. Staff spend time researching charities which provide food for families in financial difficulties. Parents of children with special educational needs and/or disabilities are appreciative of the professional advice they are given in a 'non-threatening way'. Parents value the support and guidance provided by staff; 'If it wasn't for the children's centre I would have gone mad!' is a comment reflective of a parent's views.

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?

2

In the short period since the implementation of the current governance and leadership arrangements, leaders and managers have made significant improvements

which are already beginning to result in improved outcomes and more responsive provision. Although outcomes and provision are currently satisfactory and the current value for money judgement is satisfactory, it is clear from what has already been achieved that the centre is developing very positively.

The centre is led by a dedicated and ambitious senior leadership team who demonstrate clear drive and vision. An example of this is their recent success in becoming one of only two pilot Somerset Early Years Teaching Centres in order that they are well positioned to support the quality of early years provision across the reach area and beyond.

The leadership team and staff are well supported by the members of the governing body who show a strong and passionate commitment to the development of the children's centre. They have very high aspirations to provide outstanding services for local families, particularly those who are most vulnerable. There are clear lines of accountability which are known and understood. Systems are now in place to ensure all staff have access to professional supervision and guidance.

Centre leaders have a clear direction for the centre and the development of services. This is based upon a rapidly improving understanding of the needs of the local community. Clear, appropriate targets have been set and the centre's development plan is suitably focused. Staff have appropriately concentrated on building relationships with the people of the reach community and gaining their trust and respect, as well as beginning to develop a wider range of services. They have also worked hard to develop new partnerships and build on those which already existed. This has been particularly successful with health partners who are now due to relocate to the children's centre building in the very near future.

Centre staff work to ensure that their services are as inclusive as possible. Staff recognise that they serve a diverse community and work hard to engage as many groups as possible, although accepting that they have yet to be fully successful. They offer children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their families good support through the provision of the specialist 'SNAP' group. Staff make good use of premises, which present limitations, to provide a welcoming environment. Good use of staff across the two centres in the cluster secures a good level of service during the current time of economic uncertainty and staffing restraints.

Staff have a good understanding and effective procedures to protect those children who are at risk of abuse. Effective liaison with appropriate agencies such as children's services means that concerns are effectively monitored. Robust procedures, including undertaking Criminal Records Bureau checks, are in place to ensure those who work with the children and their families are suitable to do so.

Parents are encouraged to provide the centre with their views on services; these are captured and shared via display boards. Despite staff's concerted efforts, although satisfactory, parents' influence on the advisory board is limited and the centre has yet to be fully successful in maintaining a forum for parents to share their views in

order to make a more effective contribution to the running of the centre.

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	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	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	3

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

The outcome of the inspection of Playaways Neighbourhood Nursery was considered when making the judgements during this inspection.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Glastonbury Children's Centre on 13 and 14 October 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall with some good features. It is clear that the centre is rapidly improving.

Since the change in management of the centre, staff have worked hard to build positive relationships with you. We agree with you that they have made significant

improvements to the quality of events and other services that the centre offers. Staff show a very strong commitment to improving the lives of all of you and they work well together to do so. They have developed some strong partnerships with other professionals and organisations so that they can offer you the correct support, advice and guidance. You told us how much you value the support you receive and how this has made a difference to your lives.

Centre managers have a good understanding of what needs to happen in order that services are improved even further. They are now using better the information given to them by the local authority to enable them to fully understand how they can help and support you all, including those people who do not yet come to the centre. Staff do all they can to make sure you and your children remain safe. This includes providing you with opportunities to think about how to make your homes safer; you have an increased understanding of how to prevent accidents in the home and have been provided with relevant safety equipment to keep your children safe. Staff help you when you are worried about a child in your community. They are trained well in how to safeguard children, and management have taken the correct steps to ensure that anyone who works with you and your children is suitable.

We noticed that you have opportunities to share your views with staff about the services they offer you. Staff listen to you and make any changes that they can. It is important, however, that more of you are involved in making direct contributions to the management of the centre, helping to identify how services should be developed.

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