

Inspection report for Maypole Children's Centre

at Grendon & Billesley Nursery and Family Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Not applicable
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Grendon and Billesley Nursery and Family Centre EY272646

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.

This inspection was carried out by an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held discussions with the centre leader, the senior leadership team and staff, representatives from the management board and the executive group and partners from a wide range of local services, including the health services, and users of the centre. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

The centre serves an area of significant deprivation. It spans a total of 14 super output areas with five in the bottom 10% nationally and a further six in the bottom 20%. Unemployment has increased over the last four years with many of the adult population claiming out-of-work benefits and 45% of all households comprising lone parents with dependent children. Almost twice as many teenage mothers live in the reach area as in the city of Birmingham. The majority of children enter the pre-school nursery with skills below those expected for their age. Most families living in the area are White British although the proportion of families from other minority ethnic groups is increasing; in the last year, 25% of babies born in the Billesley Ward had at least one parent of Asian origin.

The centre provides the full core offer of services as a phase two children's centre, in partnership with the co-located and privately run Grendon and Billesley Nursery and Family Centre. Together, they provide care and activities for children from birth to five years at the centre and also at two other satellite venues. The nursery and family centre is overseen by the management board which is made up of professionals from a wide range of services. It is the employing body of Maypole Children's Centre. The children's centre is governed by the executive group on behalf of the local authority. It is supported by an advisory body which oversees the work of the centre.

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

'The centre is very accommodating. I feel like part of the family. Nothing is too much trouble. It is very reassuring.' This comment, spoken by a parent, was echoed by many others who praised the centre for its effectiveness. One of the nursery and family centre and the children's centre's key strengths is the outstanding care, guidance and support it provides for families. This is because the highly effective family support team is determined to make a difference to the lives of children and their families.

Skilled practitioners know the local area very well and understand the challenges faced by a significant number of families. Consequently, the centre focuses its resources carefully to support the most disadvantaged families in its community. Working in excellent partnership with health and social services, the centre provides well-integrated support for families and a good range of activities and services.

Safeguarding of children and families has a high priority. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and all receive training to enable them to provide good levels of protection for families. Policies, procedures and practice are consistent, and robust procedures ensure the suitability of all practitioners and volunteers to work with children. Thorough risk assessments are conducted regularly.

The centre promotes users' parenting skills well through courses such as 'Promoting Happy Parenting', although opportunities are limited for them to contribute to their children's development folders in the nursery and family centre. Nevertheless, multi-agency support and early intervention from specialists are having a positive impact on children's good outcomes, especially in their speech and language and in their personal and social development. For example, children from the area achieve outcomes that are broadly in line with the national average by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. This represents good progress from low starting points, and is confirmed by a local headteacher who values greatly the work of the centre staff. The centre makes good use of the local environment to engage hard-to-reach groups during activities such as in the weekly 'Pat-a-Cakes' sessions at the local community

centre, 'Baby Massage' and the fortnightly 'Story and Craft' activities. These sessions are greatly enjoyed by everyone.

The centre leader has built a well-motivated and skilled team of well-qualified professionals who support her well. Together, with the management board and the executive group, they are securing improving outcomes for families. The centre's own evaluation of its effectiveness takes full account of feedback from families and the wide range of data provided by the local authority and its other partners. Staff make evaluations of all activities held at the centre, although children's views are not taken into account routinely to enable them to have a say in the centre's services. Even so, the centre's good track record of success shows that it has good capacity for further improvement.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Open up the opportunities for parents and carers to contribute to their children's development folders in the nursery and family centre.
- Extend the chances for children to express their views so that they can help shape the centre's services and activities.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

A very high proportion of families attend the centre and 73% of all children in the reach area. Children and their families increase their understanding of how to improve their health through good involvement with the centre. Parental comments such as: 'Children learn life skills. They cook every week and get to do things they would never do at home,' shows that families value popular cooking sessions and 'Lazy Town' activities which promote healthy eating and the importance of physical exercise. The positive impact of work in this area is seen in the high immunisation rates and very good uptake of 'Healthy Start Vitamins' among users who attend activities. The centre has had some success in its efforts to reduce smoking in pregnancy and childhood obesity. Similarly, it effectively promotes breastfeeding among new mothers.

Families benefit from the centre's safe and supportive environment. Well-qualified staff are highly trained so that users gain support regularly on a wide range of topics, which include dealing with children's behaviour, post-natal depression and domestic violence. Case studies and discussions with parents and carers show the strong impact of this work. For example, incidents of domestic violence are now beginning to fall after a prolonged period of increase. The family support team has very close relationships with the children and adults in its care, and robust systems are used effectively to support children or adults whose circumstances make them vulnerable. Outreach workers liaise very well with health professionals to ensure that the centre offers prompt support to all children in need in its community. The centre and its partners make very effective use of the Common Assessment Framework and also support the families of children subject to child protection plans.

Children behave well and are keen and active learners. They benefit from attending the pre-school on site which is managed and coordinated by the nursery and family centre. This provision, and the targeted work by the centre teacher with families of children at risk of underachievement, has directly contributed to a closing of the gap between the lowest 20% and others at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children, parents and carers enjoy many opportunities for them to learn, play and have fun together. Consequently, they achieve well and develop their personal and social skills effectively. For example, weekly sessions for 'Baby Group', 'Rhythm Time' and 'Stay and Play' enable families to enjoy learning and form close bonding relationships. Other sessions, such as 'Young Moms' and 'Dads & Kids' help mothers and fathers equally to learn alongside their children and benefit from seeing staff interact with them. One parent expressed the views of many by saying, 'Children come on in leaps and bounds and are always happy.' Another said, 'I always feel so comfortable here. The children love it so much!'

Parents and carers have plenty of access to training, and some volunteer to help in the nursery and family centre and the children's centre. Their experiences and training opportunities have helped some of them to get back into work and others to achieve national qualifications. The centre's strong links with a representative from Jobcentre Plus has been particularly successful in guiding adults towards activities that improve their employability as well as their parenting skills. Adults using the centre provide valuable feedback on their experiences. They are also involved in decision-making and governance to help shape services by participating in the new parents' forum and the centre's advisory board.

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 centre's good range of services and activities meets the needs of families well and helps them to engage in purposeful learning opportunities. This is based upon

the good use of data to identify users' needs. As a result, adults develop their parenting skills effectively through enjoyable activities and opportunities such as the 'Promoting Happy Parenting' programme. Staff use their excellent knowledge of the local area to encourage families living on low incomes and those in workless households to access services. This means that target groups, such as the high numbers of teenage mothers and lone parents, are encouraged to attend activities and benefit from the good outreach services. Several parents spoke warmly of the practical advice they receive on breastfeeding, toilet training and promoting children's language development. One said: 'Staff go above and beyond; they are really supportive with weaning and potty training. I could not ask for a better place.' Others praised the effectiveness of the centre, explaining how midwives and health visitors help them on a range of health matters. They also spoke of how advice on housing, finances and accessing welfare benefits has made a difference to the lives of their families through the monthly 'Housing Café' sessions.

One of the key principles underpinning the work of the nursery and family centre and the children's centre is the ambition to overcome the negative impact poverty can have on children's well-being. At the heart of its exemplary care, guidance and support for families is the centre's excellent family support team which has a very strong impact on users' outcomes. The outstanding focus on working with health and voluntary organisations, such as Women's Aid, to identify target groups and families at risk means that users can be signposted quickly to the services they need. This leads to the provision of timely multi-agency support that meets families' needs very well. For example, early intervention from specialists such as speech therapists helps children to make a good start to their education. One parent said: 'The level of care is really high. Staff always work around you like with personal sleep routines. They cater for all needs.' This echoed the views of others who reported that the centre always provides the help they need, particularly at difficult times in their lives.

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

Governance and accountability arrangements are clear and understood well at all levels. Leaders work as a strong and effective senior management team. Through regular meetings, the management board and the executive group check on the effectiveness of the nursery and family centre and the children's centre, and hold leaders to account. They actively participate in self-evaluation processes and contribute well to the centre's development planning and its ambitious targets for the

future. Parents are active members of the advisory board and contribute effectively to strategic planning, sharing their views well to help develop the range of provision, although children are not enabled to express their views so that they can help shape the centre's services and activities.

Partnerships with key agencies and local schools are outstanding. This is a real strength of the centre's provision through which staff ensure the integrated delivery of services. One parent commented: 'The management team is approachable and staff are always available. They point you in the right direction for other groups.' The family support team works in excellent liaison with health professionals and social services to meet users' needs, especially when dealing with family crises and with the high incidence of domestic violence in the area. The centre's records show how staff have achieved positive outcomes with children and families, which are strong examples of its good value for money.

Safeguarding arrangements are good right across the nursery and family centre and the children's centre. Procedures for ensuring staff are suitable to work with children are robust and meet statutory requirements. Training for staff gives child protection the highest priority. Records show the high value placed on ensuring that all staff have the skills to meet the needs of vulnerable adults and those with disabilities so that they keep them safe. For example, the surrounding area has many canals, lakes and ponds so the centre provides funds for all children and their families to attend swimming lessons.

The centre successfully promotes equality and diversity. It has effective strategies to engage with high numbers of adults from its target groups and is improving their outcomes. The centre engages well with all groups, including families from minority ethnic backgrounds, and promotes strong community cohesion. Many families have gained much from contact with the centre, demonstrating the centre's successful promotion of equality of opportunity for everyone. Staff are keen to promote their centre still further by giving out leaflets in the community and talking to families about its services. As a result, participation rates are high and reflect the centre's successful inclusion strategies.

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	1
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

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Maypole Children's Centre at Grendon & Billesley Nursery and Family Centre on 20–21 October 2011. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to come and speak with us, particularly those who came to the meetings on Wednesday and Thursday afternoon. We were pleased to hear how much you value the services the centre provides. You told us that the centre is a very important part of your community and plays an important role in helping you as parents. We found out that it is improving family life in many ways, particularly for those of you who face difficult challenges.

The centre is excellent at caring for you and your children. Its outstanding partnerships with health professionals, social workers and local schools mean that families in most need get the help they need quickly. Staff at the centre take great care to ensure that 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 that you use the services regularly and benefit from the exceptional support and guidance you receive.

Staff make sure that you are all safe when you are at the centre, and they are vigilant about following up any concerns in the community. Leaders are committed to providing the best possible services for you and they work closely together to make sure that the centre's programmes meet your needs. The centre offers a good range of services and activities for families in the area. These are helping you and your children to achieve well and participate in lots of enjoyable opportunities. Sessions

such as 'Stay and Play' and cooking activities are helping you to keep your families healthy by promoting the importance of eating nutritious food, staying fit and being physically active. The staff at the centre encourage you to engage in play with your children from a very early age at sessions such as 'Babies on the Move' and the 'Lazy Town' physical group. We could see how much you and your children enjoy these activities and the positive effect they are having on you and your families.

The centre is led and managed well because all the leaders, managers and staff work together as a good team, and make sure that they treat everyone equally. They are keen to go on improving the centre and so we have asked them to do two things. We want those of you with children in the nursery and family centre to be able to contribute to your children's development folders. We have asked the leaders to extend the opportunities for children's views to be taken into account to help staff shape the centre's provision.

Thank you, once again, for your contributions to the inspection: your honesty and openness helped us immensely. We thoroughly enjoyed spending time at your centre and we wish you and your families the best for the future.

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