

Inspection report for Barney's Children's Centre

Local authority	Birmingham
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Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	St Barnabas C of E Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Not applicable

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 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 an additional inspector and an early years inspector. The inspectors held meetings with staff from the centre, parents and carers, members of the advisory board and governing body and a number of partners including, health, education and childminders. They observed the centre's work, and looked at a range of relevant documentation.

Information about the centre

Barney's Children's Centre is situated on the north side of Birmingham, within the wards of Tyburn and Erdington. It is a phase 2 centre designated in March 2008. The centre provides most of the core offer of integrated services including health, family support and adult training. It does not provide full daycare provision on-site, but offers advice and guidance to parents and carers of the private daycare and child-minding facilities available within the local community. It does however offer 'stay and play', play group and crèche facilities. The centre is located in an area of mixed housing with pockets of deprivation and above average levels of unemployment. Approximately one quarter of children served by the children's centre come from households claiming benefits. The local population is predominantly White British with a growing proportion of families from minority ethnic groups.

The centre was initially sited in a portacabin in the grounds of St Barnabus C of E Primary School. However, as this was unsuitable for group sessions and the delivery of courses, until March 2011, the majority of the centre's services were delivered from a local church on the edge of the reach area, and from available rooms in three local schools. In March 2011 the centre relocated to a purpose-built building on the site of St Barnabus C of E School. The governing body of this school governs the centre on behalf of the local authority. An advisory board supports the governing

body in its day-to-day management. Children's skills, knowledge and abilities are broadly in line with those expected for their age on entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

This centre's contribution to improving the lives of children and families in the reach area is satisfactory. It is satisfactory rather than good, because although many families use the centre's services, too many of these families are not living in the reach area. This is partly due to its previous location, which did not provide easy access to local families including those from vulnerable or target groups. Now the centre is back in the local community the manager is devising strategies to engage these families more effectively. Already more families are accessing services, but there has been insufficient time for the centre to influence effectively the outcomes of some families, especially of the target groups in the local area. Consequently all outcomes, apart from the extent to which children are safe and protected, are satisfactory rather than good as the centre has evaluated them. Children achieve satisfactorily due to sound levels of staff expertise. A sound range of services, activities and opportunities are available for families, which are planned carefully considering the needs of the attendees.

A significant strength is the good-quality care and guidance staff give children and their parents and carers. As a result, families respect each other and say they can discuss anything with centre staff. Relationships are good and as one parent said, 'There is always someone who will listen and help you.' The centre is highly responsive at times of crisis and the emotional needs are met well as staff provide one-to-one support, including counselling services. Secure partnerships exist with other agencies and clear protocols regarding working practices, such as general information sharing, safeguarding procedures and effective signposting to each other's services are clearly established. The targeted work for families in need is effective, through the good use of the Common Assessment Framework. Children and their families feel safe at the centre. Various courses including promoting happier parenting, behaviour management, first aid and home safety ensure parents

and carers have a good understanding of how to ensure the safety of their families.

The centre manager is a forward-thinking leader who has effectively ensured a good staff team who are working closely together to support families who engage with the centre. Priorities are identified at local authority level and are fed into the centre's business plan. However, targets for success are not clear enough, nor measurable, and this makes it difficult for the governing body to hold the centre to account for its performance. Also although some information is available from the local authority, the data it provides is not precise enough for the centre to set targets to measure the impact of its services. For example, there is limited information about the impact of work on smoking cessation. Sound improvements alongside the good commitment of staff, means the centre has a satisfactory capacity to improve further.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Implement effective strategies to ensure that more families within the local area, especially those from target groups, access the centre's services.
- Improve accountability through the centre's business plan by having measurable success criteria which the governing body can use to evaluate the centre's performance.
- The local authority should provide the centre with up-to-date data especially regarding health outcomes, so the centre is able to tailor its services to match local needs and evaluate accurately the impact of its work.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

The centre provides a safe and welcoming place for children and adults alike and so strong and trusting relationships are forged between parents and carers and centre staff. Risk assessments ensure that activities and trips are safe and all staff are suitably qualified in administering first aid. Families whose circumstances make them vulnerable have their needs assessed through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) and there is good support for children who are subject to child protection plans. There is particularly effective care for families and individuals in times of crisis. All of this contributes to parents' and carers' good understanding of how to stay safe and ensure the safety of their children. The centre has made good use of schemes to provide safety equipment in the home such as stair gates and smoke alarms. Home safety workshops effectively support parents and carers in carrying out their own risk assessments.

The setting has recently been awarded a healthy eating award and parents and carers who use the centre are satisfactorily supported in making informed choices about health through the many services and activities it provides. For example, during 'Stay and Play' healthy foods such as fruit, wholemeal toast and water are provided instead of biscuits, juice and cakes. Courses such as community cooking and 'size-down' effectively promote healthy lifestyles to families. National programmes help parents and carers understand appropriately the importance of oral health and the dangers of hidden sugars in juices, fruits and sweets. However

activities are not always well attended, and participants are not fully representative of the reach area.

Children are developing well in aspects of their personal, social and emotional development and are making good progress. The headteacher of the on-site school comments on how appropriately children attending the centre are prepared for school life. Some vulnerable children, for example those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress but, as yet, the centre does not ensure that all vulnerable groups within the reach area achieve well enough. Children's behaviour is good, and parents and carers are growing in confidence in managing their behaviour through positive parenting programmes. Adults' personal development is good. Children learn about other people's jobs suitably, for example through topics such as 'People who help us', visits the local librarian and through role play as fire fighters and doctors and nurses. The parents' forum, questionnaires and consultations enable parents and carers to contribute satisfactorily to decision-making processes. Now the centre has moved to its purpose built building a satisfactory range of accredited courses in, for example, literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology, have been made available to users.

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

All parents and carers who spoke to inspectors were positive about the centre and were able to articulate clearly the impact different services have had on their family's lives. Good-quality care, support and guidance are offered to families in times of crisis as family support workers work effectively to meet the needs of vulnerable families including those experiencing domestic violence. Outreach work is good as the family support workers link closely with health visitors and other agencies. The commissioning of a counselling service ensures those in need of one-to-one specialist support are able to access it quickly and effectively. Parents who are in distress are seen quickly by staff and provided with effective support and a safe haven for the night. A parent was keen to tell inspectors how she could not say enough about how

staff have given her the strength to overcome challenges in her life. 'I could not have done what I have, without the staff's support. They are amazing!'

The provision offered by the centre satisfactorily meets the needs and wants of the families who engage with the centre. Their voice is listened to and informs future provision. After some parents and carers commenting that the 'Stay and Play' session was too busy, groups were created for children aged 0-2 and those aged 2+. This made the sessions more manageable which parents and carers appreciated. Regular evaluation of activities, such as coffee mornings held six weeks after courses have been completed, enable staff to measure the impact of their work. For example, the 'promoting happier parenting' course resulted in parents and carers making comments such as 'We now play more together', 'I am getting closer to my child', and 'I have better listening skills now, no more shouting.'

The centre promotes purposeful learning for children. The 'Stay and Play' and play group sessions are well attended. Sessions are planned carefully according to the needs of the children attending. As a result, children are involved, happy and engaged suitably. The bright environment and atmosphere are effective in promoting purposeful learning. All children are assessed when first engaging with the centre and their progress tracked appropriately using the Early Years Foundation Stage tracking system and through 'learning journeys.' Parents are invited to contribute to the 'learning journeys' which they appreciate. However these documents are very descriptive and identify activities rather than the learning the children have achieved. Staff are available for informal chats and more formally through termly reports and open afternoons, when parents are given the opportunity to feedback comments about their child's development. Parenting courses and child behaviour training courses are greatly welcomed and crèche facilities ensure that all can attend.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

3

The centre's manager uses her effective leadership and management skills to ensure the centre's smooth operation on a day-to-day basis. Teamwork among staff is sound and contributes successfully to the positive ethos and welcoming environment. Staff are deployed effectively and partnership working is a strength. Information sharing is good and inter-agency working is growing steadily for example between the centre, schools and health professionals. Protocols and practices for referrals are used carefully by staff. The families who use the centre have regular opportunities to be involved in shaping services and evaluating how well the provision offered has

supported them. Case studies show the vast majority are satisfied and, importantly, think their views matter. Some target groups for example those experiencing domestic violence and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are catered for well, while there is still work to do to engage fully with other vulnerable groups.

A sound level of supervision is in place, however the monitoring of outcomes for children and families lack rigour. It is limited by the lack of up-to-date reach data from the local authority in respect of aspects such as breastfeeding and obesity. Even so resources are used satisfactorily to improve outcomes of families attending the centre and satisfactory outcomes means the centre provides sound value for money. Although families are now engaging satisfactorily, including those from target groups, the centre's business plan does not provide a clear strategy for ensuring more families from the local area benefit from its services. Nor are clear measureable success criteria identified to help the governing body evaluate the impact of services provided. Governance is satisfactory. The governing body is supportive and enthusiastic and works appropriately with the advisory board. Although at the present time there is no parental representation on the board, other mechanisms ensure satisfactory account is taken of families' views.

Safeguarding is good. Records of criminal checks and qualifications are fully in place and maintained effectively. The centre has clear policies for health and safety, child protection, risk assessment and safer recruitment. Families feel welcome and secure and children learn to manage risk through, for example, participating in physical activities. Centre staff are alert to, and aware of, the importance of early intervention and regular multi-agency meetings resolve issues swiftly. Inclusion and the promotion of equality of opportunity and diversity are at the heart of the centre's work. Staff try hard to remove barriers for all families to the activities and services on offer, for example, by providing crèche facilities.

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	2
The extent to which partnerships with other agencies ensure the	2

integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	
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 inspectors took into account the inspection findings for linked provisions which took place at the same time as the children's centre inspection. The inspection of St Barnabus C of E Primary School judged its overall effectiveness as outstanding.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Barney's Children's Centre on 6–7 October 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to speak to us. You gave us lots of useful information about the centre and its work. We are pleased to know that you feel the centre is making a difference to your life and it is a safe place where you receive good-quality care, guidance and support. We agree with you that the centre is a friendly and welcoming place, with staff you can trust to help and support you. We found the centre was really good at helping people at times in their lives when they most need it. This is because action is taken quickly and different people and organisations work thoughtfully as a team to support you and your children. The staff try hard to find out if services are useful to you and we think the questionnaires, informal discussions and coffee mornings are a sound way of finding out your opinions. Comments such as, 'I could not have done what I have, without the staff's support. They are amazing' and 'There is always someone who will listen and help you,' show how much some of you appreciate the services of Barney's Children's Centre. Children and their families make satisfactory progress at the centre and so their key skills are promoted appropriately. Everyone enjoys 'Stay and Play' sessions where they learn suitably through practical activities.

However although many families do attend the centre we have asked staff to find ways of involving more families who live locally. We think that more could be done to ensure those families who are vulnerable attend the centre's activities. There is no doubt that everyone who works at this centre wants to make it as good as it can be. The centre manager and staff do a sound job, and know the services that are

successful and what needs to be improved. They have outlined all of their improvement points in an action plan. However the governing body is unable to check if actions are working well, so we have asked for the plan to include measurable success criteria. Finally we want staff to check carefully that the services and activities they provide are effective and really making a difference to your lives. To do this, we want the centre staff to use up-to-date information provided by the local authority to measure its successes in detail.

Thank you again to everyone who was willing to speak to us. It was a real pleasure to meet you and your children. We hope you continue to thrive and enjoy your time at Barney's Children's Centre.

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