

Inspection report for Birley Children's Centre

Local authority	Sheffield
Inspection number	382107
Inspection dates	09-10 November 2011
Reporting inspector	Sue Pepper HMI

Centre leader	Mrs Julie Harrison
Date of previous inspection	14 December 2010
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Linked school if applicable	Birley Community Nursery School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	EY274166 Birley Community Nursery School Daycare

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.

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 one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and one early years inspector.

The inspectors held meetings with the centre coordinator, health partners, family learning, front line workers and managers within the Multi Agency Support Team (MAST), a speech and language therapist, an early years quality improvement adviser, the childminder network coordinator, a representative of Jobcentre Plus, members of the advisory board, parents and carers and a representative from the local authority.

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

Information about the centre

Birley Children's Centre was designated as a Phase Two centre in 2006. It is co-located with Birley Community Nursery School. The school premises were extended in 2009 to accommodate the community room, where the centre is based. The centre shares the reception and office space as well as administrative support with the school. The centre offers a range of universal and targeted services with the support of key partners and commissioned services on site and at different designated locations across the area.

The centre is situated in Sheffield's South East Community Assembly area and it covers Birley and Hackenthorpe. Historically the three large housing estates were amongst the 30% most disadvantaged within England. More recently, these communities have been subject to extensive regeneration. Now there are pockets of deprivation within affluent suburbs. Recent figures show that the population of children aged nought to five years of age is 941.

The community is less diverse than other areas of the city with 9.7% from ethnic minority backgrounds. Unemployment is increasing and 17.8% of families are living in households dependent on workless benefits.

The Early Years Foundation Stage is delivered through various settings and schools. Most children enter childcare and early education with skills below those expected for their age. On-site childcare is provided alongside the nursery school for up to 24 children under eight years of age, and of these not more than six may be under two years of age at any one time. Separate arrangements are in place to inspect this provision and the report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

The centre coordinator is responsible for three children's centres. The work of the centre is monitored by the local authority and an established advisory board which consists of a range of professionals and partners. The centre is open from 8am until 6pm, Monday to Friday, 48 weeks of the year.

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

Birley Children's Centre has improved since the last inspection and now provides satisfactory outcomes for children and families. All aspects of the centre's work are satisfactory with the exception of safeguarding, which is good.

There have been many positive changes in recent months due to the clear focus on successfully addressing recommendations raised following the previous inspection. Attention to safety is high priority. Parents and carers say they feel safe and that they see the centre as a welcoming place. The centre is regularly informed of job vacancies by Jobcentre Plus. However, evidence of the impact of this work is not available. Up-take of adult learning courses is satisfactory but the numbers of parents and carers acting as volunteers at the centre or returning to work are relatively low.

Provision has also improved. Users enjoy the range of services provided, a few of which are led by parents and carers. Evaluation of services is now used to ensure parents and carers

are more involved in shaping the services offered. Partnership working is successful which is vital due to many of the services being delivered by partners outside of the centre base. The number of families registered with the centre has greatly increased and work to engage even more is on-going. The centre is not complacent and acknowledges that there could be families within the reach area not yet accessing services from which they would benefit. The numbers of male carers engaging with the centre are low. Due to limited space, services have been rolled out into the community at suitable venues across the area. The centre is aware that the marketing of this organisation must be improved because consultation with users and non-users confirms that services which do not run from the community room base are not recognised as being part of the centre's work.

The coordinator has led and managed the development of the centre well through a difficult period of change. Several of the commissioned and support services have been re-structured. Action plans have promoted improvement, however, some targets lack specific timescales and clear success criteria which can be easily measured. Several new developments are beginning to be put in place. Although it is too early to judge the impact of some new or planned changes this demonstrates the centre's satisfactory capacity to improve.

The established advisory board is beginning to improve its impact but has yet to take on a more strategic role. The board sets clear priorities for development and provides satisfactory support for the centre. It is eager to appoint an independent chairperson because this is currently the role of the centre coordinator. The centre is actively encouraging parents and carers to become more involved in the governance of the centre.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Improve planning documentation to ensure targets have measurable success criteria against which the centre can track their impact on improving outcomes for families.
- Develop provision to enhance economic well-being by:
 - increasing the opportunities for volunteers to be involved in the work of the centre
 - improving the uptake of adult learning which can lead to employment.
- Further improve governance by strengthening the way in which the advisory board provides appropriate challenge and holds the centre to account for its work.
- Improve marketing of the centre to identify and engage further with families in the community who are not accessing services, particularly male carers.

How good are outcomes for families?

3

Health outcomes are variable and satisfactory overall. Effective partnerships with health partners ensure users' needs are identified at an early stage and children's growth is monitored well. Successful strategies are in place for promoting improved oral health which is significantly better than the city average. A parent confidently explained the benefits of recommended dry tooth brushing stating, 'It prevents the fluoride from being washed away.' The take-up of immunisation programmes is also above the city average. The centre promotes breastfeeding well and this has been recently recognised through the centre achieving a 'Baby Friendly Initiative' award. A mother said 'attendance at the group made me feel more confident to breastfeed in public.' Although sustained breastfeeding has increased, the uptake of breastfeeding in the area is still generally low.

Obesity continues to be an issue, being slightly above the city average, but data suggest it is not getting any worse. Initiatives like the 'healthy eat-well plate' promote a healthy diet and some courses identify salt and sugar content of every day foods to encourage parents and carers to make healthier choices.

The number of teenage pregnancies in the area is low and effective strategies are in place to promote the use of contraceptives. Robust methods are used to collect statistics, which accurately identify the extent of smoking in the reach area; this may contribute to the apparent increased figures. The centre has yet to develop a system for tracking the impact of its work in promoting smoking cessation.

Users develop a satisfactory understanding of how to keep their children and themselves safe through practical advice, which is given out routinely within the range of courses. This is reflected in parents' and carers' feedback from the, 'Early Days' sessions where one said, 'I am now more aware of the dangers of leaving electrical appliances turned on' and, 'fire safety used to be at the back of my mind but now it is at the front.' Several parents and carers told inspectors about the difference attending 'First Aid' training had made to their confidence when dealing with accidents, particularly dealing with choking incidents. Families are particularly well supported by the effective approach of the Common Assessment Framework. Good liaison with other agencies ensures that the life chances of those on the child protection register are significantly improved.

Families, who join the 'Talking Toddlers' group led by speech and language therapists, learn how to promote effective early communication skills with their babies and children. After attending the popular 'Books and Reading' workshop, evaluations state that parents and carers went away with ideas they could use at home. A parent said, 'this has given me a different insight into how children react to stories and how a story can be broken up into different activities.' Children and adults benefit from the good-quality childcare and education they have access to. Early Years Foundation Stage profile data show the gap appears to be reducing slowly between the lowest 20% achievers. Satisfactory transition arrangements are in place to prepare children for the next step in their education.

Parenting courses, such as the 'Incredible Years' programme and 'C'mon Everybody,' have had a positive impact on some users' lives. Parents and carers learn about the importance of play and praise to effectively manage children's behaviour. The introduction of reward charts to some children has helped promote consistent behaviour and as a result, parents and carers have become more confident in their parenting skills. The popular 'Baby Massage' sessions effectively promote a good sense of well-being. Parents and carers and carers demonstrated they are fully aware of the benefits of massage in terms of aiding digestion and relaxing their babies. Some spoke of improved bonding, sleep patterns and wind relief for their child.

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	3
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

The centre comprises of one room so space is at a premium. Staff and users also have access to a small kitchen area and toilet facilities. Since the last inspection, the room has been made much more 'child-friendly' with increased resources and attractive displays. Children who attend the centre are unable to play outdoors because they do not have access to an outdoor space. However, children who attend the nursery school and childcare provision have extensive outdoor grounds which they regularly use. The coordinator has successfully overcome barriers to service delivery by extending its reach to other venues. A range of services are offered, such as 'Parent and Toddler' groups and various drop-in sessions at Birley Health Centre, Rainbow Forge Primary School, Hackenthorpe Hall Nursery and Scowerdons Community Centre.

The centre advertises services through the schools and venues they use. Users and key partners have also helped to raise awareness among families of the services the centre provides. While there is still more to do in raising the profile of the centre across the reach area, the number of families with young children accessing the centre's provision is increasing. Health colleagues use the centre's own accommodation to conduct child

assessments and it continues to be a regular meeting place for the 'Childminder Drop-in' sessions. Childminders described how accessing resources and advice at the centre has generally improved their child care practice, particularly their ability to promote early numeracy and literacy.

Parents who enjoyed attending the breastfeeding group have been supported to develop their own group, 'Stepping Stones.' The centre has sufficient understanding of the families who are using the centre and they are satisfactorily meeting the needs of most of their target groups. The 'Bliss' group, run by a parent volunteer supports those who have had babies that are born prematurely. The centre recognises the important role fathers play in their children's development and they are welcome at all groups but numbers attending are low.

Support for families using the centre is satisfactory. Strong partnership working ensures assessment in respect of the Common Assessment Framework is robust. Families who are feeling isolated or who are suffering from mental health issues, domestic violence and substance misuse are well supported to seek suitable help. The uptake of the free entitlement to early years child care places is high. Family learning, which is individualised to meet specific needs, successfully promotes purposeful enjoyment and learning for some. A typical comment from a parent was, 'I enjoyed the chance to share ideas, engage children in play and speech and to mix with others.' Personal developments, such as gaining a qualification, are celebrated. However, the centre does not sufficiently evaluate the learning and development of its users to ensure all individuals and families who use the centre achieve well. Nevertheless, care, guidance and support for some families are making a discernible difference.

Specific adult learning courses are commissioned and delivered locally to improve skills and knowledge. Representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureau are regularly available at the centre and provide families with useful, practical support such as advice on benefits, employment and the management of debt.

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?

3

Governance of the centre is satisfactory. Performance management and accountability arrangements are complex but understood. All staff are appropriately supervised by their own agency. Service level agreements between commissioned services are under review.

The centre coordinator is fully committed to working with multi-agency partners for the benefit of users of the centre. Self-evaluation is accurate and the centre has a clear vision and satisfactory plans for future developments. The centre coordinator knows the strengths of the centre and what to do to secure further improvement. A new electronic data base is beginning to enable the centre to identify trends and the engagement of target groups more easily.

The centre coordinator is a reflective practitioner who uses her sensitive and measured approach to continually promote development. She is the sole manager of this centre and she also has management responsibility for two other centres. She can draw on Charnock and Beighton's centre staff resources if required. Changes to key employees, such as the breastfeeding support worker and the parental engagement worker, have been embraced pragmatically and are leading to productive relationships with children and families. Taking these positive improvements into account the centre provides satisfactory value for money.

Recommended good safeguarding practice is adopted across all areas of the centre's work. All agencies understand the wider safeguarding agenda. Safeguarding arrangements comply with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board requirements. Recruitment and vetting procedures to check the suitability of multi-agency workers and partners is robust. Case studies evidence the good impact of sensitive multi-agency work. Successful screening of individual cases and timely intervention and prevention work prevents difficult situations escalating and reduces the incidents of repeat child protection plans. The Common Assessment Framework is used well to target specific support for families.

The centre effectively fulfils its statutory duties in respect of equality and diversity. The inclusion of children and their families is promoted well. The 'Conversation Club' respects cultural diversity which is developing in the area by providing those who speak English as an additional language with specific support. Families and extended family members benefit from this bespoke service. In addition, the 'Ready Steady Go' group is well resourced. The special educational needs coordinator helped set up this group for children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Both services are flexible to meet the individual needs of users.

The centre coordinator is keen to develop a parents' forum and to welcome more parents and carers as members of the advisory board, to promote their involvement in the governance of the centre and hold it to account for its work. Responses to ideas parents' and carers' have already shared have been used to make some changes to services. The new 'You said, we did' system ensures parents and carers are kept fully informed of what

the centre can do address their ideas. Consultation identifies fathers are interested in a specific group organised for them. Families who are using the centre express no major concerns about the centre's work or direction.

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 integrated delivery of the range of services provided by the centre to meet its core purpose	3
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

Birley Nursery School and the childcare provision delivered alongside it, were inspected 14 December 2010. Both provisions were judged to be good and they have contributed to this children's centre report and judgements.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the guidance *Complaints procedure: raising concerns and making complaints about Ofsted* 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 Birley Children's Centre on the 9 and 10 November 2011. We judged the centre as satisfactory overall.

The centre was first inspected a year ago when it was judged inadequate. This early re-inspection was arranged to find out if the centre had improved. We are pleased to report it has improved. We found no aspects of the centre's work to be inadequate.

This centre provides a safe place where families receive a warm, friendly welcome. You told us how much you enjoy the 'Baby Massage.' You were positive about the benefits of using massage to improve your relationships with your baby. Some of you even reported improvement with baby's sleep patterns and colic problems.

The multi-agency partners and workers commissioned by the centre work well together to use their professional experience, knowledge and resources to meet your specific needs. They assess any difficult situations successfully so they know what support you need. They have built strong relationships with families they have worked closely with.

You told us that family learning courses such as 'Early Days' and the 'Incredible Years' programmes have helped to develop your confidence and self-esteem and taught you better ways of managing your children's behaviour. You have increased your understanding of the importance of play and how young children learn and develop. Some of you have also attended the 'First Aid' course which has raised your awareness about what to do if your child has an accident, particularly if they start choking.

You understand the importance of helping your child develop their speaking and listening skills because some of you have attended 'Families Love Books' and the 'Talking Toddlers' group. Several of you have moved on from one course to another to develop your knowledge and parenting skills.

You told us that you enjoyed the fact the centre stayed open in the school holidays. You particularly enjoy the opportunity to meet one another and a few of you have developed your own group called 'Stepping Stones.' We have asked the centre to provide you with more detailed information so you can see how their work is improving outcomes for you all.

We have asked the centre and its partners to increase opportunities for you to act as a volunteer or develop other routes which can help you to secure future employment. We have asked the centre to provide more opportunities for fathers to become involved in the centre's work to ensure services are shaped to meet their needs.

We know the centre is hoping that more of you will be interested in sharing your ideas and views. We hope that you will want to get more involved in the governance of the centre to ensure everyone in your community knows about the services available. We hope that some of you will be interested in getting more involved in the decision-making of the centre by joining the advisory board or the parents' forum which the centre intends to develop. We have asked the advisory board to carefully monitor the centre's progress.

We would like to thank everyone who was willing to speak to us. We are very grateful for your help and wish you every success in the future.

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