

Inspection report for Becket Children's Centre

Local authority	Derby
Inspection number	383630
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Linked school if applicable	Becket Primary School
Linked early years and childcare, if applicable	Becket Children's Centre Day Care EY380753

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 meetings with the children's centre leaders, staff members, representatives of the advisory board including its chairperson, parents and carers, local authority staff linked to the centre and a range of partner agencies and users.

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

Information about the centre

Becket Children's Centre is a phase one centre. It is situated in a purpose built, self-contained building adjoining Becket Primary School, close to Derby city centre within the Abbey Ward. It was designated in September 2006. Originally, the centre was managed by the headteacher of the primary school, but in March 2008 its governance and management was returned to Derby City Council. A recently formed advisory board meets four times a year. There is currently no user group or parents' forum. The centre is currently the subject of reorganisation to change the management and staffing structure of all children's centres across the local authority from 1st April 2012. These plans are already being put into action.

The centre's reach area is one of high deprivation; national statistics show it is one of the 10% most deprived areas nationally. The population is predominantly of White British heritage. There are high levels of population transience in the area. The majority of families are lone parents, many of whom do not work with most living in rented accommodation. More recently, there has been an increase in the Eastern European population in the area. Children start nursery education with skills and knowledge that are below the expected levels.

The centre comprises two main rooms, a community room and an interview room / consultation room, and office space; there is also access to an outside play area for

the day care provision. Most services are delivered from the site, including a 24-place day care facility which is an integral part of the centre's work. When required for outreach work, the centre makes use of various facilities at local primary schools and a nearby council building. The centre provides a base from which the local health team and family visitors may work.

In conjunction with other agencies, the centre provides the full core offer. The centre itself offers a range of services including midwifery, a baby clinic, child development checks, family visitor support, a breastfeeding club, an early years programme, Jobcentre Plus sessions, 'Stay and Play' sessions, 'Bumps and Bundles', parenting courses, adult learning classes in literacy and numeracy, and a toy library.

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 outcomes for users are good because the centre serves the needs of its community well. The successful individual leadership of the centre's programme manager is recognised by families, staff and the centre's partners alike. This has led to some significant improvements in the centre's services. In the last three years, for example, the number of local women registered and using the centre has increased from under a hundred to over a thousand. The centre's data show that in the past two years, the number of male and female users, including those from the area's minority heritage groups, have all more than doubled. Participation rates are increasing across the full range of the centre's activities. The centre has gained a worthy reputation across its area because of the quality of teamwork amongst staff, and the excellent partnerships it has established in order to secure vital services for its families. Good management overall by the key staff at the centre has ensured a firm foundation for future development. The centre is building a track record of success which supports its good capacity for further sustained improvement.

The high quality of teamwork and the approachability of all staff are two of the centre's key strengths. Discussions with families show there is a great sense of trust between themselves and the centre staff. Parents, parents-to-be and carers feel

confident in approaching any member of staff; they feel they will be listened to and helped, and if they cannot be helped, it will not be for want of trying. Consequently, families are enabled to come into the centre and explain even minor worries, whether personal or health related. This leads to the healthcare team being able to support effectively the health and welfare of the children as well as the well-being of families as a whole.

The safeguarding of children and their families is excellent not only because this aspect of the centre's work has a very high priority, but also because of the outstanding partnerships with various support services and agencies. This ensures exemplary practice in the rapid response to any cases of child protection or where any member of a family may find themselves in situations where they may be vulnerable. Consequently, families feel entirely safe when they attend the centre. They appreciate that staff are tenacious in the ways they ensure their security but do not find this at all overbearing or intrusive because they say that staff all have that 'personal touch'.

The centre helps its users to develop good levels of respect for each other, and users value particularly the mutual support they are able to give each other. The centre's users reflect a good cross-section of the various ethnic and heritage groups from the area; in this it offers an inclusive service and contributes well to community cohesion. The centre plays an important role at the heart of its community as there are no major shopping or other local community hubs where people may meet and gather on a daily basis.

The centre's staff are good at collecting information and views from its users, often informally during conversations in addition to questionnaires and activity evaluations. There is particularly good support for those who may have literacy difficulties and feel less confident in writing things down. As a result, parents and parents-to-be and carers feel empowered to share their ideas and views, knowing they will be acted upon. A year ago an advisory board was established. This represents and utilises well the range of professional and community expertise existing in the area. However, there is currently no parents' forum to enable a broad cross-section of parents and carers to contribute to, and enhance, decision-making and governance.

The centre staff make good use of the data they collect. However, although the local authority provides some useful data, it is not sufficiently adequate to enable the centre to evaluate fully the impact of its activities. Discussions with representatives from the local authority show that, as part of its reorganisation plans, it is reviewing the information on its database to ensure the centre has the data it needs in a format it can use easily.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Enhance the extent to which parents and carers contribute to decision-making and governance at the centre by implementing the plans to establish a parents'

- forum by the end of the current financial year.
- Ensure the local authority provides the centre with sufficient centrally-held data on the children and families in the reach area to enable the staff to evaluate fully and celebrate the impact of its activities.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

Families benefit well from the wide range of services which help them to improve their health. The centre has been particularly successful in the promotion of its breastfeeding group, which mothers and mothers-to-be find rewarding. This is because of the good integration of this group with the timings of various healthcare appointments and the 'Bumps and Bundles' group. Mothers can visit the midwife and then join others to ask questions or talk about any concerns. The age range and experience of mothers at the centre means there is usually someone to talk with. The 'Bumps and Bundles' group is a good example of the ways the centre helps set up initiatives as a result of consultation with families. This is now mainly a self-sufficient group. Staff have worked hard to involve fathers, and just over 700 are currently registered with the centre. A good number are involved regularly in activities such as the popular early years development programme, parenting courses and 'Stay and Play'. However, specific activities for fathers, and fathers-to-be, have proved less popular, even though arranged at the fathers' requests.

There are good outcomes in the psychological and mental health of users. Although the centre is not able to provide counselling services itself, this is a part of its improvement planning. Users are able to take good advantage of signposting to services available elsewhere in the city, including through the centre's partnership links with a women's refuge. The role of the centre's teacher and family workers has been important in raising successfully users' awareness about home safety and hygiene. Users benefit well from the centre's emphasis on 'prevention rather than cure'. The centre is able to point to a range of individual cases where its intervention has led to significant improvements in family circumstances; this was confirmed in discussions with a number of families. This success results from the centre's cohesive and rigorous approach to collecting and sharing information, and its prompt action on decisions made at multi-agency meetings. Families and children benefit well from the very effective coordination and support they receive when they find they require multi-agency assistance because of circumstances which make them more vulnerable. Their needs are assessed thoroughly through the Common Assessment Framework (CAF).

The centre's excellent links with a whole range of support agencies enables both its staff and families to draw upon a wide range of professional expertise. For example, together with the healthcare team the Fresh Start anti-smoking advisor is helping mothers to stop smoking. Discussion with some mothers concerned shows they feel their babies are much healthier as a result, and this is confirmed by the midwife's records, particularly concerning babies' weights. Attendance at the Jobcentre Plus sessions is higher than average. Data from the advisor shows good proportions of clients being referred to training or for employment. There are very effective links with social services, not simply in cases of child protection but also to help monitor

the general well-being of any children in care.

Good levels of enjoyment and achievement are to be seen as a result of the centre's work on the promotion of children's learning and development. This is particularly successful in the ways it enables parents and carers to learn and play alongside their children. Discussions with mothers, fathers and carers show high levels of appreciation as to how this group helps them. This relates to their own and their children's social skills and independence, as well as their children's speech, early numeracy and mark-making skills. Some parents also take the additional opportunity to gain Open College Network (OCN) qualifications while studying the development of their own children. Other parents simply enjoy using the information they collect on their children as a 'memory book'. The centre's involvement with Every Child a Talker (ECAT) is also helping raise parents' and carers' appreciation of a child's language and communication development. This initiative is supported well through leaflets and 'I can do it' training giving top tips to encourage children's talking. Data show such initiatives are raising steadily the proportion of children reaching expected levels of development by the time they start school.

Families are helped effectively by centre workers across a whole range of life experiences. This extends from support with hospital appointments to helping set up a new home and equipment for a baby. Where grants or funding is available, users appreciate that the centre staff will always point them in the right direction. Parents are given good opportunities to share their ideas and views with staff. This helps develop their self-confidence and enables them to make better decisions to help improve outcomes for both themselves and their children. Parents are represented well on the advisory board. However, there is no parents' forum to give them additional opportunities to extend their influence and increase their contributions to decision-making and governance.

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 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 provides a good quality of care, guidance and support for its users. This is because of the effective ways in which its services are integrated. Its activities are designed well to meet the needs of the families in its area. The family worker team has proved very supportive through its regular outreach programme of home visits. The centre listens carefully to the suggestions of its users. Consequently, it is still building its services and planning to introduce further activities, such as counselling and baby massage, by next Spring.

There is particularly good support for children and their families with any special educational needs and/or disabilities. Planning for the support of such children is good and assessments are used well to target their next stage in learning and development. Records show such children make good progress, and any specialist support and advice provided is acted upon swiftly. Staff are willing to undertake additional training, if necessary, to ensure good levels of care are maintained. The centre has good access to translators for any families whose first language is not English. There is good support for any families whose members may have visual or aural disabilities and need help with communication.

The centre's strong partnership with Derby adult learning services ensures the provision of well-attended adult literacy and numeracy classes; the centre provides a crèche for such sessions. This is a particularly important service as data shows a much higher than average proportion of adult illiteracy in the reach area. These courses and the qualifications gained help promote well parents' prospects for further learning and employment. All those attending have individual learning plans. Support workers provide additional help for users with extra needs, for example those with dyslexia. Other facilities, such as the toy library are much appreciated, particularly by families on limited incomes or benefits. The 'Stay and Play' group, which the parents have named 'Little Angels', is another much valued facility. The centre's practical parenting courses are fully subscribed, and reflect the centre's philosophy that in strengthening families it is helping to strengthen the community as a whole.

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	2

How effective are the leadership and management?

2

Since taking over the centre three years ago, the centre's programme manager has built an effective team of skilled and well-qualified staff. Teamwork is seen as important because the centre's philosophy is that the children and their families always come first. There are good levels of accountability, not only through performance management and supervision, but also through careful and regular

analysis of the impact of the centre's activities. The advisory board may be relatively new and still developing its role, but members, including parents and volunteers, play a valued part in helping to forge links with the community. This has, for example, resulted in partnership links with the local YMCA and the development of school holiday activity projects. The centre's management, including the advisory board, aim to enhance further the effectiveness and impact of the centre through the establishment of a parents' forum. There are good working relationships with partner primary schools. The programme manager and midwife have undertaken joint visits to all the local doctors to discuss how they may work together for the benefit of the users. There is particularly good attention to targeting low-confidence families to develop their self-esteem and build the skills necessary to underpin the family's future economic well-being.

The excellent safeguarding arrangements stem from a rigorous approach which is understood well and practised by all staff. All necessary checks on staff and adult volunteers, regarding their suitability to work with families, are undertaken. Child protection and health and safety have a high profile, and risk assessments are thorough. The importance of early intervention is embedded and centre staff play an important role in any multi-agency work. Any necessary paperwork in relation to safeguarding is maintained and organised meticulously. The teamwork links between the centre, health services, family workers and social services are established firmly and operate very efficiently.

There is good strategic and action planning which takes the centre up to the end of the current financial year. Thereafter, this responsibility transfers centrally to the local authority under the pending reorganisation. The centre has not always received all the necessary data to help it assess fully its impact and successes. For example, it was only this month that the centre itself was able to acquire the relevant data it needed about the percentages of the various heritage groups in its area. This confirmed it was reaching representative proportions of its local population. The programme manager has voluntarily started an 'Equality Impact Assessment'. This is to ensure that the new management of the centre, from April 2012, has a full account and evaluation of the extent of the centre's partnerships and its priority and target groups. This is aimed well at establishing a basis to ensure continuity for users. As a result of such approaches, and the year-on-year increases in registrations and success of its activities, the centre provides good value for money.

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,	2

illegal or unlawful discrimination is tackled and the centre fulfils its statutory duties	
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	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

Inspectors looked at the previous March 2009 report on the registered day care provision for early years children at the Becket Children's Centre. The overall effectiveness of this provision was judged to be good. All requirements of both the compulsory and voluntary parts of the Childcare Register were met. Inspectors also looked at the December 2009 report on Becket Primary School, which judged the school to be satisfactory.

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Summary for centre users

We inspected the Becket Children's Centre on 15–16 November 2011. We judged the centre as good.

We would like to thank all of you who took the time to talk with us during our recent visit. In addition to those of you we spoke with at random, there were many of you who asked to see us because you wanted to tell us about the good experiences you and your children have at the centre. These conversations were very helpful, and none of you had any criticisms of the centre's work, only praise for its impact on both you and your families. You told us that you have confidence in the staff, and this has clearly led to important improvements for your families and support for your children's development. Your centre is an inclusive one and many of you spoke highly of its good contribution to improving life in your community. You said that you see this as an important outcome which enhances your lives.

We were pleased to hear that you are full of praise for the help and support the staff give you. We saw the high levels of trust you have in them, and just how hard they work on your behalf. We saw proof of the excellent partnerships between centre staff, health care staff and family workers. Excellent attention is given to ensuring

that you, your children and families are kept safe and healthy. Safeguarding arrangements meet every requirement and are outstanding. The centre staff are particularly good in the ways they support those of you whose circumstances may make you more vulnerable or when you and your families find yourselves in a time of difficulty. There are many good things about your centre; one of the most important is the fact that you feel confident that you can walk through its doors and know that you will receive help and support as well as a very warm welcome.

As many of you will know from the local news and newspaper reports, all children's centres in Derby City are going through a period of reorganisation. A number of staff will either be leaving or changing jobs from 1 April 2012. The centre's programme manager and advisory board have been working hard to ensure that those taking over the management of the centre have all the information they need to ensure you continue to receive good service. We have asked them to make sure that you can make additional contributions to the decision-making and governance of the centre through a parents' forum. Some of you have already volunteered to become involved in this new venture, and we hope that more of you will do so.

Over the past three years, your centre's leaders have collected a good deal of local information which has helped them understand your needs and put on the activities you want. The local authority provides some data to help the centre evaluate how well it is doing compared with other children's centres across the country. We have discussed this with people from the local authority and asked them to make sure that the centre has the data it needs in a form which will be helpful and easy to use.

Over the past two years an increasing number of families from your community have benefited from your centre's services and activities. We hope that many more will continue to join you. We thank you again for all your contributions to the inspection.

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