

Inspection report for Nailsea and Backwell Children's Centre

Local authority	North Somerset
Inspection number	383784
Inspection dates	24 –25 April 2012
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Centre leader	Ellen Genge
Date of previous inspection	Not applicable
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Linked school if applicable	Kingshill 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 representatives of the centre's partnership board, local authority service leaders, health colleagues, parents and with the leadership team. Other partnership agencies linking with the centre and member of the staff and users of the centre were also consulted.

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

Information about the centre

Nailsea and Backwell Children's Centre is very small with two part-time and one full-time members of staff. It is run from a site in the grounds of Kingshill Primary School. The site is isolated and new premises have been obtained in the centre of Nailsea which will run in tandem with the existing site. This will become functional in June 2012. The centre is a designated phase two centre offering full core provision. This includes family support and outreach to parents, child and family health services and adult education. The centre is run and managed by the partnership board for the local authority.

The centre is in an area of relative affluence with a few pockets of social and economic deprivation. It is the second least deprived area in the county. There are 702 families with children under five years of age and 877 children in this age range in the reach area. The percentage of lone parents is around 13% and is below the national and North Somerset averages. There are around five per cent minority ethnic families in the area. Around 12% of children are living in households

dependent on workless benefits, which is well below the county and national average. On entry to early years provision, the majority of children’s skills, knowledge and abilities are below those expected for their age.

Amongst the wide range of activities offered by the centre are breastfeeding groups, early pregnancy groups, parenting courses, stay and play, mum and baby yoga and baby massage. Local community baby clinics are currently run in the local health centre and will transfer to the children’s centre new site when it opens in June. The centre has links with community paediatric services and special needs groups as well as groups supporting those suffering from domestic violence. The centre is open for two and a half days a week in line with Business Support Administrator hours.

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

Nailsea and Backwell Children’s Centre is welcoming and friendly, and makes good provision for families living in the local area. They say they feel relaxed, comfortable and safe with the centre staff. Leaders and managers ensure that staff go out of their way to meet families’ individual needs. The centre was described to inspectors by a parent as being ‘an inch wide, but a mile deep’. All families spoken to were extremely positive about the centre and staff. Amongst other comments, all of which were positive, were ‘Everybody matters here’ and ‘I feel safe here, I never feel as if I am being judged.’

Purposeful leadership is a key factor in this well-thought-through provision and as a result good outcomes are achieved. The centre is very well organised and communication, particularly with partner agencies, is strong. As a result, the day-to-day running is effective.

The outcomes for families are good. They enjoy and value the wide range of activities offered – and, if they are not directly provided by the centre, families are directed and supported in finding where their needs can be met. Children make good progress in developing the skills they need to successfully transfer to primary school. There are effective opportunities for adults to develop their life skills through

a good range of courses, although the range of vocational courses is limited. Many courses are designed to raise self-esteem and give confidence in order for users to be able to return to work.

Staff are committed and dedicated. They care passionately about the centre and its users. They have a very good understanding of the reach area they serve and the challenges it presents. They have strong partnerships within the community and work closely with other agencies in order to provide the best possible provision. Partnership board meetings ensure that services are fully utilised and the provision for users is cohesive and has a positive impact on their lives.

The range of services offered meets the needs of the families well because provision is constantly analysed and evaluated. Due to the limited resources, priorities have to be made and great care is taken not to duplicate or replicate services provided elsewhere. For this reason, the centre does not provide a pre-school. 'Think Family' meetings between a range of professionals are extremely valuable in ensuring the right services are provided for individual families.

Supervision is good and ensures provision is constantly evaluated and improved or amended. The self-evaluation processes are rigorous and take into account the views of families including the children, and partnership agencies. This means that priorities for development are accurately identified. Safeguarding procedures are rigorous and ensure all of the families are kept safe. The centre has very good relationships with parents and consults with them well. There is provision for fathers in the area to which the centre signposts families. However, the centre does not currently work sufficiently closely with this provider or offer additional support to fathers which focuses on opportunities to more effectively help them learn how they can bond with their children through play or improve the home learning environment.

The strong teamwork, relationships with and commitment of all stakeholders ensure that there is good ongoing monitoring of the quality of all services offered to ensure that they are effective. The monitoring and support carried out by the partnership board and the local authority are robust and support development well, thus ensuring that the centre has a good capacity to further improve.

What does the centre need to do to improve further?

Recommendations for further improvement

- Build on existing links in order to provide more opportunities for fathers to more effectively bond with their children through play and expand the home learning environment.
- Expand the range and number of vocational courses for adults in line with the needs of families attending the centre.

How good are outcomes for families?

2

There is good in-house promotion of healthy lifestyles. This means that families with young children gain a good understanding of healthy eating as well as the importance of hygiene and exercise. The comprehensive support programme has led to a high take-up of healthy lifestyles by an increasing percentage of families. There are good opportunities for children to play outside as part of groups provided to support parents as their children's educators and in 'stay and play'. Data supplied by the centre show that, although the percentage of mothers sustaining breastfeeding began to fall slightly, a concerted focus on this has led to a rise from 53% to 64% since September 2011. Buggy walks and courses in basic cooking as well as weaning programmes have all helped ensure the percentage of obese children in the reach area, at eight per cent, is below that seen nationally. There are strong links with the community health services and parents are signposted to the clinics held by health visitors.

Many parents spoke to inspectors and praised the numerous ways in which the centre has helped them. The centre has identified a specific target group within its reach area, that of families with significant emotional and mental health issues. Families accessing the specific support provided for this group speak highly of the sympathetic and infinitely practical support from staff. Case studies illustrate how targeted support has had a positive impact on these families and also other vulnerable parents and children, for example those experiencing family breakdown and those subject to child protection plans. Families experiencing domestic abuse have been supported well in accessing the services they need and help in escaping possible life threatening situations.

Families attending the centre feel safe and protected. This is because safeguarding procedures are robust and extremely thorough. Children show themselves to be very safe and very happy, and are shown how to play safely. Staff supervise children very well during activities and case studies show that the support they provide for parents is having a very positive impact on parenting skills, particularly in the area of behaviour management. There are good arrangements to work with children on the child protection register and those subject to the Common Assessment Framework, and they are effectively monitored.

There is good support for parents and their children to improve the quality of their play experiences, have fun and learn together. Parenting programmes and support are effective in engaging families whose circumstances have made them hard to reach and improving vulnerable mothers' confidence and self-esteem. Activities to provide a means for fathers to play and learn with their children are more limited and less structured. Children make good progress from their starting points. A strong link with the local schools means that key focus areas have been identified. The focus on helping children develop their early learning skills has contributed greatly to the significant narrowing of the achievement gap at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage between the lowest achieving 20% and their peers. It is currently running at 20.8% and has seen a 9.9% decrease since 2009/10 when it was over 30%. This is significantly below the national average of 31.4%. The good relationships between the school and the centre means the transition to school is

seamless.

Families make positive contributions to the community. As well as a parents' forum, both parents and children are invited to provide feedback in the form of oral or written evaluations to show how much they value and enjoy the activities provided. Some parents have become members of the partnership board actively participating in the governance and decision making processes. One commented to inspectors 'I want to be able to give something back.'

Families are very appreciative of courses such as 'Struggling with Finances' which help them budget effectively, and also of the financial advice they receive. Parents, including targeted groups, are supported well to achieve economic independence through access to appropriate training to prepare them for a return to work. These courses do well in raising self-esteem and confidence, and provide stepping stones to further learning, volunteering and employment opportunities. Some of those attending and successfully completing these courses have expressed a wish to move on to more vocational courses which are currently more limited.

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 engages a good percentage of the most in need families in the reach area. Due to its size and limited resources, the needs of target groups are meticulously assessed and the most appropriate methods of meeting needs are decided and action taken. Good systems are in place to support staff in measuring outcomes for all users. Key performance indicators show that the impact of services is good. For example, there are very few minority ethnic families in the area, but when some requested help with learning English, they were supported well in finding and attending appropriate provision in an adjoining area.

There is a good balance of outreach and in-house services. The drop-in groups

provide very good opportunities for the family support worker to meet with young and lone parents in a relaxed atmosphere. The groups provide good opportunities for young mothers to meet and socialise with others.

Babies and mothers both benefit greatly from the drop-in sessions with the midwives, and sessions such as baby massage provide good opportunities for social interaction as well as producing calm and relaxed babies. The centre provides crèche facilities for when courses or meetings are in progress.

There is a good range of activities for all families to access and the centre focuses well on where need is greatest even if attendance at a course may be relatively small. For example, a cookery course was provided for a small number of young mothers who were struggling to provide healthy meals on a very limited budget. This was highly successful and they now shun convenience and junk foods because they have learned the value of using fresh ingredients. Practical courses such as 'Struggling with Finances' and baby massage lead to better parenting skills.

Attendance rates at the centre are increasing steadily and the family support worker and staff promote the engagement of more families through home visits, leaflet distribution and excellent one-to-one contact. Since September, over 100 new registrations have been made. While the centre leaders are confident that being in a more high profile position in the town centre in June will help increase numbers, they are not complacent, and consistently and actively seek to increase registrations and attendance at the centre.

All the evidence demonstrates that care, guidance and support is good for all families, especially those in target groups. The referral system is good so that practical assistance and support are provided extremely quickly and efficiently, and often bring about closure sooner.

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

Accountability arrangements are very clear and governance is good. There are good links and liaison between the partnership board and day-to-day management. Effective communication and organisation mean that the centre runs smoothly. The partnership board monitors the centre's activities effectively through visits, meetings

and observations. Members are challenging as to the centre’s performance and have high expectations of the centre to meet the testing targets it is set. The good-quality supervision for the staff feeds into a well-thought-out and appropriate performance management structure. The links between strategic planning and service provision are effective.

The quality of leadership from the centre leader and team leader is good. Staff are wholeheartedly committed and dedicated to the work of the centre and are determined to do their best for families in the area. Self-evaluation is rigorous and analytical, as a result key priorities are set that will benefit all families and members of the community. It is supported by evidence of the impact on outcomes for users and has led to changes in provision, for example the expansion to new premises in order to more fully meet the health needs of the wider community.

The centre is committed to promoting equality and diversity, and it promotes inclusive practice for families and disabled children or children who have special educational needs. It is committed to an approach that takes account of the views of all families and the partnership board. Safeguarding arrangements are robust and all essential policies and procedures are in place. Rigorous checks have been made on all adults, staff and volunteers who work at the centre, and training for all staff in safeguarding and child protection is up to date. Policies and protocols are all very clear and all records are kept very securely. Procedures to ensure the safety of families who use the centre, such as risk assessments, are wide ranging and robust.

The centre has established a wide range of partnerships and services in order to ensure provision has a positive impact on the lives of the families. Resources are well managed and reflect well the determination not to duplicate and replicate services. As a result, the centre works constructively with other providers to benefit the centre and its families. 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, 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	2
The extent to which the centre supports and encourages families in the reach area to engage with services and uses their views to develop the range of provision	2

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

None

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Summary for centre users

We inspected Nailsea and Backwell Children’s Centre on 24 and 25 April 2012. We judged the centre as good overall.

Thank you for making us feel so welcome and contributing to this inspection by sharing your experiences of the children’s centre with us. Many of you told us how friendly and welcoming everyone is. You gave us a very positive picture of the centre and this was very helpful when we came to make our final judgements.

The centre is successful because of the good leadership provided by the centre leader and team leader. Although the centre is very small, the staff work together well as a team and they have very effective relationships with their professional partners such as the health visitors and midwives. All those who work at, or out of, the centre communicate very clearly with each other and, as a result, there is a good understanding of your needs and of others in the community as a whole.

Through the many activities that the centre provides, we can see how much you and your children enjoy, for example, the drop-in sessions, or courses such as ‘Struggling with Finances’. The parenting and breastfeeding courses are well supported and we are pleased that so many of you benefit from these. We could see that that centre staff make sure you have plenty of support if you need it and that children are making good progress in their learning and development.

Parents and children are all benefiting from the good provision made by the centre and you have good opportunities to feedback your views. We can see there are lots of opportunities for families but we would like to see more activities specifically to help fathers bond with their children through play. We have also asked the centre to

set up a greater range of vocational courses for adults to help expand your work opportunities.

We would like to wish you, your children and families who live in the Nailsea and Backwell area the very best for the future.

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